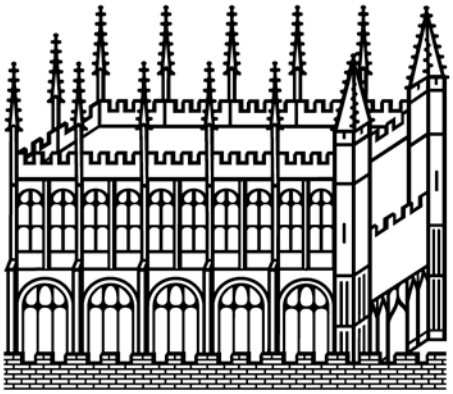

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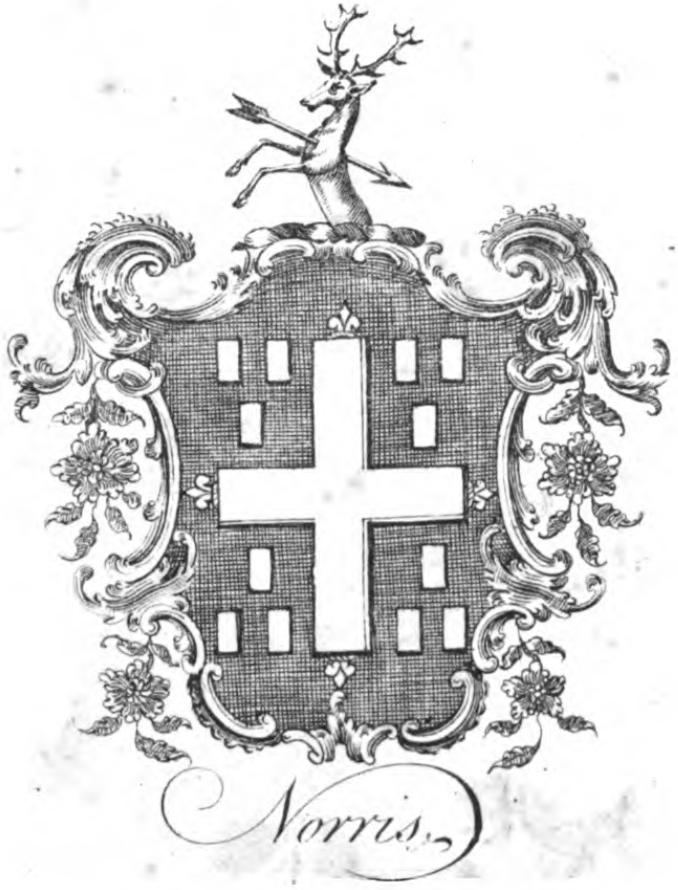

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REMARKS

ON

REVELATION & INFIDELITY:

BEING THE

SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL SPEECHES

LATELY DELIVERED IN

A PRIVATE LITERARY SOCIETY

IN

EDINBURGH:

WITH

ANECDOTES OF TWO OF THE MEMBERS;

AND

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING TWO LETTERS WHICH SINCE PASSED BETWEEN THEM.

BY A. M. SECRETARY.

Non enim necesse est, si alteros præponas, alteros vituperare. Ne cupide pugnasse contra veritatem puteris. Item vitiosum est, de nomine et vocabulo ejus rei controversiam struere, quam rem consuetudo potest optime judicare. Nos tamen intelligamus, vitiosum esse intendere controversiam propter nominum mutationem.

CICERO.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY JOHN MOIR, PATERSON'S COURT,

FOR S. CHEYNE, BOOKSELLER, NO. 22. GEORGE-STREET;

AND VERNOR & HOOD, NO. 31 POULTRY, LONDON.

1797.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor of the following sheets thinks it necessary to inform his readers, that the conversations which have supplied the materials of his publication, were held in the months of November and December last; and that the idea of communicating them to the Public, struck him when the subject was first proposed. He had long had occasion to see, or thought he saw, that infidelity was gaining ground; that its progress was extended, and its influence increased, by artful and assiduous misrepresentation, on one hand, and by thoughtlessness and vice on the other. He therefore conceived, that no more essential service could possibly be rendered to Society, than by endeavouring to recommend, and, as far as possible to promote, among those whose principles were unformed or unsettled, a serious and fair investigation of a subject, of all others the most important.

With this view, when the consideration of it came before the Society, of which he happened to be a Member, he paid the most particular attention to the arguments there delivered; noted them down with as

much fidelity and exactness as he was master of; and, as they had a very strong effect on himself, he hopes the present abstract has not so entirely obscured their force, or tarnished their beauty, but that they may yet have some influence on others. At least, he is disposed to flatter himself, that thus some persons may be induced to give the argument a fair hearing, and, where they find it here deficient or obscure, to apply for farther information elsewhere; which, if they are once disposed seriously to attend to it, they will certainly be at no loss to discover.

As the subject was introduced into the Society, or at least supported, on the infidel side, by an appeal to two pamphlets in answer to *Bishop Watson's Apology*; the one entitled, "Watson refuted, by SAMUEL FRANCIS, M. D." and the other, "*The Apology for the Bible examined*, by A. MACLEOD," which were then just published; it was the Editor's wish, to bring the following little work forward immediately, in order to serve as an antidote to the poison of those publications. He accordingly had prepared, and nearly transcribed it for the Press, by the middle of January: The publication, however, has been thus long delayed by a variety of circumstances, which it was impossible to foresee, and which, as they are entirely of a private nature, it is unnecessary to detail. The delay, indeed,

might have been advantageous, had the Editor had leisure to direct his attention to the improvement of the work; or could he have prevailed on the Member chiefly concerned, to take it under his own care. One advantage, however, he thinks it has derived by the delay, from the two Letters in the Appendix; an addition which, he is inclined to think, will prove agreeable and useful, and which, as they were written several months after the whole was finished, were only communicated to him about a fortnight ago, with leave to make use of them.

The Editor has also had an opportunity, whilst the work was lying by, to hear the opinions of some of his friends, respecting the propriety of publishing it at all. On one hand, he was told, that the works, the effect of which it was intended to defeat, were too contemptible to attract attention, and too glaringly absurd to mislead, if they should; that, in fact, they had already fallen into the oblivion they merited; insomuch that the second part of one of them, said to be in the Press in September, had never yet appeared: that, therefore, it would be paying them a higher compliment than they deserved, to publish any confutation of them; and that any such confutation might rather do harm than good, by bringing them again into notice, and by making it be thought that they were more important than is really the case, and even, by provok-

ing more such unworthy attempts to mislead the understanding and to corrupt the heart. On the other hand, it was argued, that the attempts of infidels had of late been more than ordinarily numerous: that they appeared in every shape that was calculated to confound or to mislead; under the artful mask of Christian charity; under the shadow of a liberal defence, of reason, philosophy and virtue; and sometimes they came forward with the boldness of avowed atheism. It was therefore contended, that as their assiduity was so great, and unfortunately so successful, it became the duty of every sincere Christian, to do his utmost to check the growth of an evil so fatal to the peace and happiness of society; to restrain, if possible, those who had already been deluded; to direct and assist those who were coming into the world, against the artful attacks to which they would certainly be liable; and to confirm those who were as yet unseduced.

By these, and such like arguments, the Editor was led to think that his efforts might do some good; and he trusts they are so conducted that at least they can do no harm. Of controversy he is well aware there is no end; for there ever have been, and probably ever will be, men who, when it is likely to serve a purpose, or to gratify a restless spirit of singularity or contradiction, will controvert and misrepresent the most

certain facts. He is equally well convinced, that as controversy is generally carried on, especially with respect to religion, against which objections are urged age after age, and year after year, in spite of confutation, improved in nothing but in their futility and boldness, it is far from being a desireable thing for a quiet man, to enter into it :—nor is he ignorant that the following little work, when viewed by persons less interested, may be thought liable to objections which he does not at present perceive. As, however, he by no means pretends to hold it out as a complete or perfect treatise, from its nature and origin this could scarcely be expected, he trusts he may lay claim to some degree of candid interpretation, on account of his intentions. The objections of the petulant, or the sneer of the infidel, he hopes he has fortitude enough to disregard ; but the approbation of the candid scholar and sincere Christian, no honest man would wish to forfeit.

On the whole, the Editor trusts, that, as his intentions, in making this use of the materials afforded him, are good, the errors which may be thought to attach to his part of the execution, will be the more readily forgiven ; and that, on the whole, the effects of the publication may be beneficial. Of one thing he is certain, that, could he command a serious, unprejudiced, and unimpassioned attention to the subject, his pur-

pose would be completely attained. Christianity rests on a basis not to be shaken :— Sophistry, negligence, vice, or the three combined, may partially conceal its value, and misrepresent its evidence ; but, when these are subdued, its importance and its proof must be irresistibly convincing.

EDINBURGH,
JULY 1ST 1797.

THE

INTRODUCTION:

CONTAINING

AN ACCOUNT

OF

THE FIRST DEBATE.

AMONG the various Societies instituted by private persons in this metropolis, for amusement, instruction, or debate, there is one of which I, A. M. have the honour to be an official member. This society is numerous, and, as we ourselves imagine, respectable. It consists of persons in various situations of life, and of very different modes of thinking. We were one evening, not long ago, assembled as usual, and discoursing in our common desultory way, some on Religion, and some on politics. The opinions were more various than I had observed them on former occasions, and were delivered with less reserve. In politics, many of the members seemed to lean towards democracy, or, to what they termed, *a state of nature*; and for Christianity there was only one who dared to be a strenuous advocate. The others who thought as he did, were ei-

ther too shy to defend their opinions so publicly, or they were awed into silence by the ridicule and effrontery of its bolder opponents.

One young gentleman, (Mr Goodwill) whose speech commanded universal attention, and seemed to meet, from some of the members, with much applause, descanted, with peculiar warmth, on Prejudice, which he declared to be the only support, either of our Politics or Religion. He claimed universal liberty, not only in thinking but in action; and he confidently asserted, that all systems of civil and ecclesiastical restraint were the genuine effects of local prejudices; "And accordingly," says he, "we find that they vary exactly with our situation and circumstances. Actions which our education leads us to consider as criminal, are, in other portions of the globe, where the people are nearer a state of nature, looked upon as indifferent, and even praise-worthy. It is well known that, in some states, when the people are so far advanced in years as to be unable, from the infirmities of age, to procure for themselves the necessaries of life, they are *removed* from the world by their own children. There is, therefore," continued our youthful orator, "no necessary distinction between virtue and vice; and the restraints of law and religion, which subsist in the several nations of Europe, are, of consequence, direct and absurd infringements

of our liberty, and of the rights of enjoyment, to which, as men, we are all equally entitled, and from which it is consequently criminal to withhold us, and pusilanimous in us to be withheld."

Mr CHRISTIAN, a gentleman more advanced in life, who displayed strong marks of disapprobation, and sometimes of pity, at the sentiments thus confidently expressed, and at the person who expressed them, said, that, he was never more astonished in his life, than he had been by the speech he had just heard. He did not think it possible, that, by any society of persons in this country at least, pretending to philosophical improvement and refined thinking, such opinions would be borne, much less approved, as he was sorry to observe these had been by many of the gentlemen present. He remarked, that he had bestowed much patient attention on the various branches of philosophy, not for any professional purpose, but for the sake of improvement, and as an elegant and useful employment for his leisure time. But, he declared, that if philosophy had the smallest tendency to reduce us to the deplorable situation which the gentleman was pleased to call *liberty*, he would gladly, were it possible, drink copiously of the stream of Lethe, and forget all that he had endeavoured to acquire with so much anxious labour. " If freedom from prejudice, and the rights of enjoyment," conti-

nued he, " can only be procured by our having it in our power to commit murder, or any other crime, when it suits, or we think it suits, our convenience, it will be the interest of every one of us, for our own sakes, if nobler motives shall have no influence, to hug prejudice as the guardian of all that is dear to us, and to spurn the rights of man, if such be the consequences of those rights, as our deadliest foe. Learning and philosophy have generally been considered, and I am still disposed to consider them, as, next to religion, conducing the most to the encrease of human happiness, and to the alleviation of human misery.

" I foresee, from the apparent sentiments of some who now hear me, that I shall be accused of prejudice and bigotry, for having thus given the first place to religion? But I beseech such persons to have so much candour and common honesty, whatever their individual sentiments may be, as to bring the matter to a fair issue. Independent of the world, as much as external circumstances can make me, and free from the influence of professional prejudice, I am yet not ashamed to acknowledge myself a Christian; not because I was born one, but from conviction and mature deliberation. I have never been under the controul of irksome authority, nor obliged for a livelihood to make profession of a faith I do not entertain. Left to my own government at an

early age, and indebted to my parents for an ample independence, and for,—what I consider as of much more importance,—the elements of a good education, my inquiries, as far as I am able to judge, have been candid, liberal, and free. But my investigations, both with respect to religion, philosphy, and politics, have produced in my mind convictions very different from those of the young gentleman who introduced this subject;—convictions, however, which have afforded me, in every stage and vicissitude of life, more real enjoyment and heart-felt satisfaction, than I am perhaps able to express, or you to conceive. I am ready, therefore, since no other person seems disposed for the task, (if, since the subject has been suggested, the society be inclined to give it a fair hearing) to defend Christianity against the young gentleman and his friends, who seem to consider Savagism as the natural and philosophical state of man, and licentiousness as his truest happiness. Nor shall I be at all staggered in my purpose by the words *prejudice* and *bigotry*, so often and so unjustly applied to men of my sentiments, being convinced, from a very extensive, and, as I think, just observation, both of men and things, that religion may be professed and practised, without the smallest tendency to either, and that men professing no religion, and ridiculing all who do, are as often liable to the influence of

prejudice and a bigotted attachment to their own opinions as the most superstitious Christian who ever disgraced the Revelation of Jesus."

Some desultory conversation immediately ensued on the proposed debate. The young defender of infidelity was considerably abashed at a speech so unexpected: but he at length acquired the confidence to say, that surely the gentleman was totally unacquainted with the philosophy of the times, so much superior to the abstruse and formal nonsense of other periods, and particularly with that most complete confutation of the false systems of theology, by the celebrated *Thomas Paine*, in his *Age of Reaſon*.

Mr Christian replied, that if the philosophers of the age were reduced to the miserable shift of resting their opinions on the sophistry of a man so avowedly ignorant of general science, and of the subject in question in particular, they must give up all claim to the love of wisdom, and the character of learned;—and he added, that he would venture to recommend to Mr Goodwill's serious perusal the masterly *Apology* of Bishop Watson, which, he was happy to observe, for the honour of his country and of human nature, had met with that attention which it so amply merited.

Another member observed, that the gentleman had better not speak so decidedly in favour of the Bishop's work, nor so con-

temptibly of the learning of those called infidels, lest, on further reflection and enquiry, he should find himself deceived in the estimate. Thomas Paine, it was acknowledged, though a man of genius, had little learning, in which it would readily be granted that the Bishop was more than his match. But what would Mr Christian say, or what could he object, to that most astonishing effort of philosophic erudition, critical sagacity, and accurate research, produced against the *Apology for the Bible*, by the most renowned, learned and accomplished philosopher, Doctor Samuel Francis, and entitled, *Watson refuted*, &c. ?

The defender of Christianity immediately said that he had seen the work alluded to, and was not at all alarmed, either by the author's pretensions to philosophical profundity, or by his rude assertions of the insufficiency and false reasoning of his venerable antagonist; and he promised, before their next meeting, to give that work a farther consideration, and to bring forward, on that occasion, such remarks as it and the subject in hand should suggest. After some farther conversation, this was at length agreed upon as the subject of the next debate, on that day fortnight, and the meeting broke up for the evening.

INTRODUCTION

TO

THE SECOND DEBATE:

Containing an Account of the Observations of the Members on the first; and of the Birth, Education, and Mode of Life, of Messrs CHRISTIAN *and* GOODWILL.

1. THE speech of Mr Christian, and his volunteering to defend religion against the attacks of Mr Goodwill, or any other opponent, and particularly his undertaking to answer Doctor Francis's work, which was by many of the society considered as a master-piece of learning and argument, afforded much amusement, and abundant matter for ridicule, to the infidel party, who esteemed Mr Goodwill's oration, on the other hand, as a most wonderful effort of early genius and manly freedom of thought. To those, however, who were not so far gone in the study of infidel philosophy, and who therefore hesitated about approving modern licentiousness to such an extent, Mr Christian's conduct appeared in a very different light. Respectable in his character, and easy in his circumstances, they knew he could have no motive in the task he had un-

dertaken, but a love of truth ; and they considered him as fully equal to what he had undertaken, from his being possessed of a very sound understanding, improved by very accurate and extensive observation. They therefore determined to suspend their judgments, and candidly to weigh the evidence and reasoning which Mr Christian had pledged himself to bring forward. We shall in the mean time endeavour to amuse ourselves with a short account of the two gentlemen who are principals in this dispute ; from which we may in some measure be enabled to estimate the nature and force of their convictions ; and to judge to whom the epithets of *prejudiced* and *bigotted* may with most justice be applied.

2. HISTORY OF MR CHRISTIAN.

THOMAS CHRISTIAN, Esq; is the representative of a very ancient and respectable family in Scotland ; and, being an only son, whilst he inherited a very ample fortune, he enjoyed the advantages of an excellent education. His father, Frederick, was a third son, and, with little previous instruction, was placed in the Navy at an early age. In this situation he served with much reputation till the year 1755, when, on the death of his eldest brother Thomas (the second having died in the West Indies about a year before,) he retired to the family-mansion, and

in a short time was married to a young lady of very amiable manners, but of little fortune, to whom he had long been attached.

About the end of the year 1756, Mrs Chriſtian brought him a son, who was baptized by the family name of *Thomas*. She had afterwards several other children, but they all died young, and her attention came at length to be soley directed to the education of the survivor, who, at a very early period, displayed that mildneſs of temper, and docility of disposition, accompanied with an ardent thirst for knowledge, which has characterized him ever since. His father, whose education had been neglected, was particularly anxious that his son should enjoy greater advantages than he himself had done; and he was resolved to spare no expence in bringing it about. He urged him to literary emulation, by stating, in his blunt way, the numerous inconveniencies he himself had suffered from a confined education; and his advices agreeing with the natural temper of the boy, made a very deep and successful impression on his mind. Mrs Christian's attention was chiefly bestowed on the morals of her son, in stating to him the advantage, even in this world, of virtue, of honour, and honesty, and the disgrace and disadvantages of an opposite conduct. On these several subjects our young scholar thought with a precision frequently beyond his years, and, by the time he was sixteen,

and thought fit for College, he had even studied the truth of the Christian Revelation. He was excited to this investigation by accidentally meeting with an attack upon that religion, the perusal of which struck him most forcibly. The author complained, in the bitterest terms of invective, against the clergy in particular, for their ignorance, bigotry, disingenuity, and persecuting spirit; and he treated the whole order, Christians and Christianity, with a degree of scurrilous abuse, which appeared to our young student as a strange abuse of the liberty of the press, and a most unwarrantable perversion of the terms, *truth*, *candour*, and *philosophy*, which occurred in almost every page, and which the author asserted to be the sole objects of his work. The perusal of this extraordinary book, led our anxious student to enquire into the evidences of Christianity, which, considering his years, he did with astonishing success. He read various books upon the subject, but was best pleased with *Leslie's short method with the Deists*, and *Gibson's* (Bishop of London) *Pastoral Letters*, because they treated the subject in a narrow compass, and yet placed it in a clear light, and on its proper basis.

He was a few months after this removed to one of our Universities, where he pursued his studies, for the space of three years, with much applause. He regularly attended the private literary societies of his fellow stu-

dents, which he contributed to set upon a more respectable footing than such societies generally are. By the acknowledged superiority of his own acquirements and circumstances, he was enabled to repress, with ease and dignity, the ebullitions of vanity and self conceit, so common among boys of that age. When he heard, as at first he sometimes did, those conceited orators throw out a sneer at religion, aprove of some licentious or sceptical opinions, and ridicule some respectable characters in the University and the State, he usually remarked, that if such things were allowed, he must deny himself the pleasure of attending their meetings; and he should consider it as his duty to endeavour, as much as in him lay, to put an end to them altogether: that they were neither qualified to judge of religion, nor of the characters they affected to despise: that their opposition to them was the effect of ignorance and licentiousness, which, as students of philosophy, and enquirers after truth, they ought to be ashamed of: and, lastly, that modesty, and docility, and not pride and self conceit, ought ever to be the distinguishing characteristics of persons in their situation. In this way he quickly restrained the petulance of his companions, and rendered their meetings both respectable and useful.

During the second season of his residence at college, he was severely afflicted by the death of his mother, which happened at

Bath, in consequence of a violent cold, which was followed by a fever. Of this loss he cannot yet speak without the severest emotions of distress. To her he considers himself as chiefly indebted for the foundation of those principles, and of that practice, which have afforded him an inexhaustible fund of comfort in his passage through life, and which he would not now resign for all the gold of Ophir or Peru. At the age of nineteen, he was sent to Oxford, where he spent several years, very much to his own satisfaction and improvement, in an unreserved intercourse with the learned men of that celebrated University. At the age of 22, he was called from this pleasant retreat of science and the muses, by the death of his father, which was sudden and unexpected; and thus, with a very ample fortune, he became complete master of himself, without a single relation nearer than a distant cousin. He long and sincerely lamented his father's sudden death; and he felt his situation so new and so unexpected, that it was sometime before he entered actively into the management of his affairs. Having at length, in the year 1779, put his matters in a proper train, he set out on a tour to the continent of Europe, during which he improved the knowledge he had acquired by study, in the still retirement of academic groves, by an accurate and extensive observation of men and things. He spent

about two years in France * and Italy, and had free access to the literati in both countries; in conversing with whom, however, he had often occasion to lament a tendency to sneer at religion, without understanding it, and to ridicule every thing, as superstitious and narrow-minded, which was serious or manly.

He afterwards went to Germany, where he spent full three years, mostly in the Universities, and in the society of the learned. This was a period which afforded him much useful information, and much matter for serious regret. In France he had found infidelity and licentious philosophy to be very general; but they struck him as the transient effects of corrupt morals, and national levity. It was in Germany that he first saw infidelity assume her most odious and dangerous shape; that he saw her come forward, in the artful garb of an enquirer after truth and sound philosophy; and that he saw scepticism and irreligion systematically disseminated, to the destruction of all serious principles of conduct in this life, and to all comfortable prospects in a future. Materialism was the universal doctrine; and annihilation the universal belief, of many societies called philosophical. These doctrines, when spread, as they were most artfully, among the

* For this, it being a time of war, he required a special passport, which however in that period was easily procured.

vulgar, produced effects the most baneful. They caused unbounded licentiousness, as far as the severity of German law would allow, both in principle and practice, and exhibited to our astonished traveller the genuine effects of infidel philosophy and sceptical science, to be, the annihilation of human happiness in this world, and of still higher expectations in another.

This was a season of much serious reflection to Mr Christian. He investigated, with much assiduity, every subject of philosophy, moral and physical, in order to discover whether there was really any just ground, in reason or in fact, for the opinions he thus found to be industriously, though secretly, disseminated in various states of Germany. He underwent this trouble, for the purpose of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, both in their origin and effects; and pursuing his enquiry, with the most candid and patient attention, he at length concluded, from what he considered as the most unquestionable evidence, that the origin of such notions as he had remarked was generally to be found, 1. in ignorance, or the misconception of some principle of science: 2. in pride, and the affectation of singularity; and, 3. in moral licentiousness, which naturally produces an impatience of all external restraint and subordination. These sources he found sometimes to be separate, and sometimes combined; and for

the progress of the principles arising from them, he thought it extremely easy to account. Singular opinions, which had no tendency to restrain either the conduct or the passions, however irrational and improper, he found to be well calculated to attract the attention of the ignorant and conceited; who, because they have a set of notions different from other men, are apt to conceive themselves also to be possessed of superior wisdom and discernment. He was astonished at the effrontery (which would be inexcuseable if they really possessed all the learning they pretend to) with which such men abused every system but their own, and every professor of different principles; using all the odious epithets which language affords. Their own precious philosophy was, at the same time, extolled to the skies, as the unparallelled effects of literary investigation and refined thinking, whilst, to a sober unbiassed spectator, its only aim and natural consequence seem to be,—the destruction and suppression of the principles and practice of every other system, without attempting to substitute any thing in their room, but the comfortable doctrine,—to licentious men I mean,—that there is no such thing as morality, or a right and wrong in actions; that in the system of things which we behold, there is neither benevolence nor any other paſſion; that death is an eternal sleep; and that men may act in this world as best suits their in-

clination or their passions, (i. e.) *like the beaſts that perish.*

From these wild and comfortless doctrines (from the consideration of which, in their origin, progress, and effects, he became more and more convinced of the neceſſity and truth of the Christian revelation) Mr Christian at length turned his attention towards his native country, and arrived in London in 1784. He had been urged by his friends to accept a seat in the new Parliament; but though he had determined to return, and to stay for some time in London, he declined the honour which they had most earnestly urged him to accept. Here he lived in habits of great intimacy with all the learned, attending every society where knowledge was to be acquired or improved; till, about two or three years ago, when he returned to Scotland, he took upon himself the charge and improvement of his property, and at length completed his domestic felicity, by marrying an amiable woman, who has since brought him two children, a boy and a girl. He was still partial to literary pursuits, and to the company of learned men; and accordingly in Edinburgh, as elsewhere, he sought for amusement and instruction, in the intervals of business and domestic enjoyment, in the pursuits to which he had been so long accustomed; and he was particularly partial to private literary societies. It was this partiality which brought

him into the society which we have mentioned above; and we shall now leave him, till he appear in that society again as the advocate of revelation.

3. HISTORY OF MR GOODWILL.

Mr Goodwill is about 25 years of age, and succeeded, about 10 years ago, to a property, not extensive indeed, but extremely comfortable. He was also an only son, his mother having died about two days after he was born. His father, who, during the short period of his mother's life, behaved with great propriety, fell soon after into dissipated and expensive habits, which at length put a period to his existence, just in time to save his fortune from total ruin. Young Francis was just 15 when his father died; and, from the example which he had afforded him, he was ripe for any course of dissipation to which he might be tempted. His temper was naturally amiable; his abilities were good; and nature seems to have intended that he should be modest. But he was left so much to himself, or to servants, that those natural advantages were not only not improved, but they were abused. He became forward, petulant, and assuming, and he disdained to follow any advice but his own. He went to college soon after his father's death, but it was to spend time, not to improve in science. He was considered

as the oracle of all the idle boys in the University, and his will was at all times considered as a law. Drinking, and every other mode of dissipation within his reach, he gloried in; and, by affecting a singularity of opinion on important or common topics, he wished himself to be considered as a man of genius. Religion he treated with great contempt; and the restraints of morality he considered as the whims of an old woman. Without at all considering the matter with the attention and candour of an enquirer after truth, he gathered together a few common place invectives, in the application of which he was extremely liberal. The Clergy he reckoned a set of prejudiced and bigotted knaves, who made a livelihood by hood-winking the people; and he declaimed, with great acrimony, against that superstitious mode of thinking which considered dissipation and irreligion as criminal or improper.

With all these faults, so many and so great, the poor young man had really what is called a good heart; and, had he fallen into better hands, he would probably have made a most respectable figure. At the age of 21 he became completely his own master, which in some sense he had been from his earliest years. His dissipation now increased; and he was preyed upon by all the needy minions of vice,—till, in the short space of two years, his fortune began visibly to

diminish. An old relation of his mother's had influence enough with him to make him turn his attention, after passing a year or two at college, to the study of the law; and he had just passed advocate, a week or two before he made the speech which we have already recited; and such is now the disordered state of his affairs, that it is more than probable he will be obliged seriously to apply to his profession to earn a livelihood. At present, however, he does not seem to be aware of this; and he goes on in the same thoughtless career as he set out upon. But we shall now leave him and return to the business of the society.

ACCOUNT

OF

THE SECOND DEBATE.

At the time appointed, the society met, and was constituted as usual. Mr Christian observed, that he hoped every gentleman present was disposed not to raise idle objections, or to excite ill-timed ridicule, but to enquire for truth, with the assiduity and candour of true philosophers; and that, during the interval which had elapsed since their last meeting, they had been carefully inves-

tigating the evidence for the subject on which they were now to dispute.

Mr Goodwill, who had been excited, by the unlimited praise of his associates, to become again the oracle of the infidel party, replied, that there was no occasion for the investigation which the gentleman thought so necessary:—that it was not to be expected that they, who had so much other business to mind, were to occupy their time in poring over musty volumes, and old wives fables:—that it was self-evident that they were in the right, because they followed only the dictates of nature, and the unbiassed principles of their own minds. Satisfied, therefore, of the propriety of their principles and conduct, they rested the defence of them, not so much on argument, as on the feelings of mankind, when freed from the prejudices of Christian education and clerical jargon. To shew, however, that they deserved the name of philosophers, in which they gloried, they were willing to hear what Mr Christian had to say. For though he would certainly fail to convince them, or to show any fallacy in the reasoning and arguments of the learned and renowned Dr Francis, he would at least afford them some amusement, the only purpose for which he and his associates thought it worth their while to attend the society.

"Had I known, said Mr Christian, that this was the only purpose of your attend-

ance, and these your determined sentiments, I should certainly have never become a member of this society, nor have undertaken the taſk which I did at our last meeting. Convinced, however we might differ in our modes of thinking, that we were all equally sincere in our enquiries, and equally disposed to embrace truth, wherever it should be found, I promised myself much instruction from an intercourse so unreserved; nor could I have imagined that men, who on all occasions cry out so violently against prejudice and bigotry in others, would have shewn themselves to be so completely under such influence. But infidels, I find, are the same in every country; they are similar to poor hen-pecked husbands, who, while they are from home, declaim with much force, and apparently with very lively feeling, against petticoat-government; but they no sooner return to their own house, then they submit to the frowns of a scolding wife, without a murmur, and without making a single effort to resist. Infidels have got an idea that morality is of no moment, because they feel it irksome; and that revelation is false and superstitious, because it sanctions morality with divine authority; and they act and reason upon these notions, without enquiring whether they be founded in truth or not. They talk against prejudice, but it is generally the only source either of their opinions or their practice. The evidences

of Christianity have been supported with all the force of argument, and recommended with all the charms of candour and of eloquence. They have been stated separately, and they have been combined together; and, I am bold to say, they are calculated either way to afford, to an honest undissipated mind, which will attend to them, irresistible conviction.

" You, gentlemen, have avowedly not attended to them; and it is therefore not to be expected that any thing which I can say will induce you to change the resolution in which you appear to be determined. It would therefore be an unprofitable waste of time, to enter into a complete detail of all that has been produced, by the indefatigable labours of the learned and the pious on this subject; since a determined infidel never can, because he will not, be converted. What I have to say, however, short and desultory as it may seem, will probably have some effect upon those who are less resolute; and if I shall have the happiness to induce them to a farther and candid investigation of the subject, they will find ample satisfaction in their enquires, from the labours of persons much better qualified to discuss it than I pretend to be. It will be impossible for me, during the present evening, however, without fatiguing both you and myself beyond what is necessary, to go over even all the ground which I have planned out for my-

self. It is my purpose at present, then, by making some general remarks, to endeavour to remove some previous difficulties, and to obviate some general objections: and if I shall be able, by this means, to fix any one's attention seriously to the subject, we shall be better able, at our next meeting, to consider the work of Dr Francis, so confidently appealed to by Mr Goodwill and his friends.

" Infidels, I have already had occasion to remark, are constantly sounding in our ears, the words *philosophy*, *science*, *truth*, and *candour*, as if they alone were in possession of what is meant by those words. It is to be feared, however, that, whilst they are thus disputing about the shadow, they sometimes lose the substance; and that, whilst they are amusing themselves with words, and difficulties, and objections, they totally lose sight of the truths intended to be conveyed by them, and about which they contend. The origin of infidelity, however, is not to be sought for in reasoning. There is a step previous to argumentation, which will generally be found to have had more influence with every one of them, than any anxiety for truth or candid wish for information. They know that religion, if it be true, will affect their conduct very intimately, and in a way for which they are not prepared. They find the attractions of the world to be strong, the pleasures of sense to

be inviting, and the ridicule of religion, which forbids these, to be among their ignorant and thoughtless companions very general. The gradual and unceasing influence of dissipation, by removing their minds from the serious contemplation of the religion in which they were educated, leads them first to wish, then to suppose, and at length firmly to believe it to be false. They are next prompted, by a process natural to the human mind, in order to justify its own misconduct, to seek for arguments to defend a position already assumed, and which, be the arguments strong or weak, forcible or inconclusive, they are not disposed to abandon. The first step to infidelity, then, generally is immorality and dissipation; and the business is completed, if, whilst under this influence, religion be attacked by ridicule, the force of which depends on bringing detached parts of the system unfairly and improperly together; on exhibiting it and its ministers in odious characters; on falsely connecting their conduct with the truth of their profession; and on insinuating, that they do not believe what they pretend to teach. It is thus that infidels and scoffers are often made, without one argument or probability so strong as would induce a man to hazard the smallest earthly possession or enjoyment. Such, O young man, are the dangers which surround thee in the world! such are the snares laid to entrap thy unsuspecting innocence, and,

under the specious garb of liberal sentiment, and scientific enquiry, to plunge thee into the ignoble servitude of vice and error, and thus to despoil thee of thy fairest and best inheritance!

"That there may be infidels who have misled themselves by reasoning, and have continued or become infidels, after enquiries comparatively accurate and honest, I shall not question; being disposed to hope the best of every human being. Some such may now hear me; but I must be allowed, at the same time, to remark, that I have never yet met with one in any country, whose character and modes of thinking I had it in my power to analyse and consider, whose infidelity was not the combined effect of pride, of vice, and prejudiced enquiry. Indeed, there is no subject on which our passions and prejudices are so apt to exert themselves, and to mislead us, as in religion. Because, if true, it most intimately affects us, many partialities must be overcome, before we shall find ourselves willing to consider its evidence with the proper disposition.

"It is from the influence of such partialities, however artfully that influence may be concealed, that we have so often heard of the insufficiency and doubtfulness of moral evidence, when compared with mathematical, in order, as it would seem with a shew of reason, to account for devious conduct and erroneous opinions. Such objectors forget,

however, that these two kinds of evidence differ only in kind, and that in force the one is equal, in its own place, to the other in its. It is certainly to be granted, that moral truths have been oftener questioned than mathematical; but when the circumstances are considered, this will be found not to be the fault of the evidence, but of men themselves; and therefore to be no just cause for concluding that moral truth does not amount to certainty. The truths of mathematics are all abstract and speculative. They seldom excite either passion or party; and the bulk of men are ignorant and careless whether they be true or not. Moral truth affects us more nearly, and has to contend with more numerous and more partial adversaries. It excites our passions, because it affects our situation, and breeds opposition, because it directs our conduct. When men, by the influence of passion, of lust, or of example, are led into devious conduct, they exert every faculty to excuse themselves; and as they wish to think their conduct right, they persuade themselves that it is so, in contradiction to reason and to evidence. The very same thing occurs also in mathematical subjects, when men are, from a spirit of opposition, or from other circumstances, led into erroneous opinions; and subjects which we think clearly established, on the most abstract and invariable principles, prejudiced, ignorant, or assuming men are

not afraid to controvert. If a man does not see, will not acknowledge, or is not aware, of these circumstances, he is ill qualified to judge of moral reasoning, and is certainly not at liberty to invalidate its credit, because he evidently has not attended to the grounds on which it rests, nor to the prejudices it has to oppose.

" If we could conceive a being, such as angels are represented, completely superior to human partialities, and with faculties so enlarged as to comprehend, with one grasp, the situation of man in this world, and his relation to the next, the bounded extent of his intellect, and the boundless range of objects and existences which surround him, he would doubtless be astonished,—he would be moved with anguish, and with pity, at the puny animal, when he found him attempting, by his confined and bounded faculties, to determine what does and what should exist, —as if, instead of being a creature, he were fitted to be the creator of the whole. We come into the world without any exertion of our own, and are unable, of ourselves, to exist a single day. Our bodies gradually increase, and the faculties of our minds expand, not through any care of our own, but by the culture of others. All that we are, and all that we have, is nothing of our own; and what, under the influence of education, and the instruction of those about us, is capable of great exertions, and of large attain-

ments, if left from the first to itself, would in all probability be capable of nothing. A greater instance of human pride, therefore, combined with folly and weakness, has seldom been exhibited, than by those infidel writers, who attempt *a priori* to prove the non-existence of God, and that any revelation, if there were one, is unnecessary. That beings,—so weak, so limited, and ignorant, as we are, viewing all the orbs which swim in the immensity of space, and all the works which attract our notice on the surface of our own globe,—should presume to think that our puny understandings can scan the whole,—be able to determine what ought to exist, or to comprehend all that does,—is a piece of affectation so truly ridiculous and absurd, as to demand rather pity than confutation. It is impossible for beings, such as we are, to prove any thing *a priori*. Limited, with respect to the origin of our existence, and in the extent of our faculties, when existence is conferred, we can know nothing till we acquire that knowledge from actual observation, or from the information of others. From what we see around us on the earth, and in the heavens, we certainly gather the strongest proofs of a superior existence, so vast and dignified, so full of wisdom, and so replete with knowledge and power, that we, and all our faculties, and all our acquirements, sink into nothing when compared with it. This argument *a posteri-*

ori, because it is more important, and more intimately affects our conduct, has indeed been disputed; but it is notwithstanding equally clear with, and more affecting than, any proposition in Euclid. Finding ourselves to be parts of a great creation, and individual objects of some mighty scheme, in the formation of which we had no hand, and of the origin of which we can of ourselves know nothing, it would be strange folly and pitiable presumption in us, to determine *a priori* the purpose for which the world was created, or the end for which we ourselves were called into exiſtence. Our capacities are so limited, and our natural means of acquiring information are so few, and uncertain, as effectually to quash the presumption which impotent pride might be apt to excite.

" It is in vain for us to attempt to prove *a priori*, the certainty or uncertainty of any thing. The attempt, in whatever way we conduct it, unless we were possessed of faculties very different from, and very superior to, those we do possess, will be found to be ineffectual. From the circumstances, however, in which we find ourselves placed, and from the nature of our mental powers, as unfolded by experience, we can most clearly deduce the necessity of a divine revelation; and, if there be a God, infidels themselves grant its possibility. Without a revelation, or some kind of instruction or other, and left entirely to himself, we find

that man would never be able to arrive either at truth or certainty. The bulk of mankind, even in the most improved situation and circumstances, are careless of all speculative enquiries, because they find themselves sufficiently occupied in providing for their corporeal wants; and of those who should have leisure and inclination to spend their time in the investigation of truth, few would arrive at any certain conclusion; and there would, in all probability, be as many contradictory systems as enquirers. With faculties so confined, and sources of information so uncertain and variable, it must be a degree of presumption, scarce credible, in any human being to determine in his own mind against the being of a God, or the possibility of a divine revelation. It is judging of what he has no power to judge. It is arguing without *data*, and concluding without reason. Speculation on such subjects is vain, impracticable and inconclusive. We are only capable of judging of the credibility of the fact,—and to the investigation of this all our enquiries must necessarily tend, or they will mislead us, by a mist of unmeaning words, into the labyrinth of error.

" There is no period of time, nor any set of people, to which we can confidently refer, in which and among whom we do not trace some species of religion, and some pretences to divine communications. A belief

so universal must be the effect either of an innate conviction,—of some extravagant fancy in ancient times,—or of something real. We find nothing in the nature or progress of the human mind which warrants us to suppose that any of our ideas are innate. It must therefore have been the effect of fancy, or of some actual communication. If we suppose, for a moment, that the whole is the effect of fancy, and that there is no foundation, in fact, for believing either in a God or in religion, the person who first suggested these notions to his fellow men, (for some one or more must, on this supposition, have done so,) must have had unusual prejudices to struggle against, and an unusual fortitude of mind to attempt to settle his contemporaries in the belief of a doctrine so totally new to them, and which he must have known to be a mere whim or conception of his own. Men, in the early ages of the world, as in those more improved, would in general be so occupied with their own private concerns and employments, as to be little disposed to pay attention to a circumstance so new, and which, though even proved by speculative arguments ever so plain, the bulk of men, to whom such an idea had never once occurred, would have been little able to understand, and not much disposed to attend to. But how came this person or persons to light on an idea so extraordinary? It is easy for us, who are acquainted with such sub-

jects from our earliest years, so as almost to conceive them to be first principles, to reason abstractedly on the being of a God, and the nature of a revelation: But if no communication of either was ever made in any age, he must have been the most extraordinary genius the world has ever heard of, who first contrived the artful tale; and his success has been equal to his abilities; since there is no period to which we can advert, nor any people whose history we are acquainted with, but who possess those ideas in some way or other. His success, in propagating a falsehood, is more extraordinary than the contrivance of it;—in propagating a falsehood, too, which would most materially affect the conduct of those who were induced to believe it; and yet of any such person or persons, or of the nature and progress of their doctrine, no trace is left, and no probable account can be given; unless we have recourse to those books which Jews and Christians believe to be divine.

"If there were no such being as God, and, consequently, if no divine communication was ever made to man, the idea of such an existence, and of such a revelation, never could have occurred to any human being. We can reason from axioms to something higher; from principles already known, or proved, we can deduce conclusions with which we were before unacquainted. But the case before us, as it is

beyond the limits of human observation, appears to be without the province of human reason. The mind of man cannot create a single idea. We can conceive such a thing as a golden mountain; but, had we never seen nor heard of a mountain, and were we totally ignorant of the metal called gold, such a conception would be impossible. If there were gradations in impossibility, I should deem it still more impossible for any human being to conceive the idea of God, unless there really be such a being; or of a divine revelation, unless such a thing actually took place. Almost all our inventions, however useful, or however signal, and especially such as occur in ages little improved, are more the effect of chance than of reason and argument. We afterwards fortify them by reasoning, and shew by what natural process they might have been made out; but we generally owe the first thought more to accident than to scientific investigation. But where reasoning happens to be the source of invention, and it is doubtless the only source to be depended on, there must be some intermediate steps by which we proceed from less to greater; some analogy on which we can ground conjecture or argument. But here nothing of this kind obtains; and to conceive the whole to be the effect of accident, is still more absurd. No reason can be assigned for such extravagant notions (as on the supposition of their

falsehood, we must esteem them) arising at all, and still less for their appearing as matters of fact, on the testimony of history and general belief. But if, absurd as the supposition is, we should imagine them to be the gradual effect of a chance-thought, it is still equally impossible to account for their general dissemination all over the world, without even, in the earliest ages to which we can refer, leaving a single trace of the original inventor. It is neither probable nor possible,—unless these notions were known in the very infancy of society, to the very first family which ever existed,—that in their extent they should have been so general, and in their grand outlines so similar. They who can suppose it possible, must recur to suppositions much more improbable and absurd, than, upon any principle or pretence, the account of Moses can possibly be esteemed. A large portion of mankind, both in this and every age, have erred egregiously in their opinions upon these subjects; but their very errors prove the general truth of the facts. For such notions could have had no existence at all, and much less an universal existence, had they not been, at one period, and that in the very infancy of the human race, derived from reality. It is impossible, on any principle of solid reasoning, to conceive that man,—left to himself alone, and from observations constantly interrupted by the supply of his corporeal

wants,—should so generally conceive the idea of a God, and that that God had revealed his will to himself or his progenitors, unless such were really the case. Upon the supposition that some such revelation did actually take place, it is easy to conceive the progress of the fact, from truth to falsehood, from purity to error. The idea so general, therefore, must be traced to some original occurrence. It is neither probable nor possible to have existed otherwise.

" From hence, then, it will become the duty of every man, who is qualified, and has leisure for the inquiry, to examine, with accuracy and candour, the several pretensions to revelation, which have attracted the notice or commanded the belief and obedience of mankind. It is the duty of every man of leisure, and of every infidel in particular, to make this investigation. It is an enquiry of the utmost importance, as it tends to develope the human character, to clear up the history of the human race, and to trace the origin of an opinion, truly important as a piece of literary information, independent of any consequences of its truth or credibility. No person in such an enquiry, can be at liberty to make *a priori* conjectures in his own mind, respecting the nature of the Deity, or the probable tendency of any revelation he may be presumed to make. It is an historical fact, in which imagination has nothing to do, and in the investigation of

which the fancy is only calculated,—under the semblance of abstract or necessary truth, and with the pretence of fortifying the mind against supposed absurdities, by imaginary laws of propriety and rectitude,—to withdraw the mind from the consideration of evidence. By such pretended caution, and such sceptical speculation, instead of being led to any certain conclusion, the mind becomes so warped with prejudice, and so blinded by the mist of speculative error, that no direct argument, not even a miracle, it is probable, would convince it. Important, however, as such an enquiry would be, even in the light of literary employment, infidels seem unable or afraid to make it. They take up their notions at random, or on trust, and the only consideration they will vouchsafe to this curious subject, is by the bye, or through the medium of ridicule.

" The uniform and unbiassed belief entertained by all nations, ancient and modern, barbarous and civilized, of some revelation, certainly affords the strongest degree of *teſtimonial* evidence for the truth of the fact, that can possibly be expected or required. He that can account to his own mind for this circumstance, without granting that for such belief there must have been some original foundation in fact, that some revelation was actually made, need not accuse Christians of credulity, since he himself thus concludes contrary to the strong-

est probability, and reasons against a fact universally acknowledged, and which, therefore, must be true. To frame a deceit, when something of the same kind exists in reality, is neither difficult nor uncommon. It is extremely easy to account for the progress of pagan error, on the idea that there was some original truth from which it gradually degenerated, and to trace the rise of Romish superstition from a source of purity, truth, and simplicity. The restless mind of man, when it has once got possession of an idea, is constantly busied in extending it to new relations; and that corruption, which universal experience shews us to exist, often leads him, in bringing about such combinations, into error. It is remarkable, however, that in every species of human vice, and in every state of intellectual error, we are at first deceived, and seduced with a resemblance of rectitude and of truth. In every species of religious corruption, the deviations have been the gradual offspring of some original truth, misrepresented or misconceived; and though, in their final progress, they may be too glaring and too gross for enlightened minds, they mislead the generality, because their progress being slow, and almost imperceptible, the falsehood is not so easily detected.

"If there never was any revelation at all, it is impossible to conceive how the belief of it should have been so general, without

the smallest direct evidence to support its credibility. It is possible, indeed, and has been so in every age, to mislead men with pretended revelations. But this happens, merely because it is firmly believed, and universally acknowledged that such things *have* happened already, and *may* therefore happen again. But, supposing the whole world at this moment never to have conceived nor heard of, the idea of a God, or of revelation, it would be found extremely difficult, I may say impossible, to impress any such notions on their mind, without such clear evidence of supernatural power as could not be resisted. Even this must be partial in its effects, and could not, in the revolution of many ages, extend to every climate and to every people rude and civilized. In the investigation of historical, as of scientific truth, a *philosoper* (and infidels speak much of philosophy) will endeavour to extend his researches to some final cause, or original event, from which the opinion or circumstance he is considering may be supposed to have taken its rise. It would be worth the while of infidels, then, as it is unquestionably a subject of great importance, to spend some of their leisure time, not in the unrestrained ridicule of all religion, but in a serious *investigation of the true and fabulous theology;* and we may venture to predict that, if they conduct the enquiry with that accuracy and attention

which it deserves, and with that candour which they praise so much; and if they be really disposed, as philosophers should be, to give credit to that system, if any such shall be found, whose evidence shall be sufficient to prove its truth, they will, in all probability, draw a very different conclusion from that of Thomas Paine.

As we cannot reason *a priori* against the being and attributes of God, so neither can we determine before hand the nature or consequences of any revelation which the Deity may be disposed to make to us. We are incapable of judging either of its matter or manner, because it respects another life as well as this,—a system of things with which we are totally unacquainted, and of which we can of ourselves form no judgment. A thousand different modes of revealing his will are certainly within the compass of Almighty power and infinite wisdom. But so little are we qualified to judge of the propriety or impropriety of what is so much beyond the reach of human apprehension, that that may finally be found to be the most rational, and the most useful, which to us may appear the most inadequate. Some one mode or other, if any revelation be given, must necessarily be used; and it would indeed be gross presumption in us to question the propriety of any mode that may be employed, or to dare to dictate another, and, according to our contracted notions, a better one. Im-

pious and absurd as this presumption certainly is, it is not unfrequently met with in infidel writers, both with respect to the matter of religion, and to the evidence by which it is supported. We of the present age possess great advantages, in point of knowledge and religion; and because we can now, abstractedly from all direct reference to revelation, reason out several important truths, we imagine, perhaps rashly, that the human mind is of itself, and independent of all external help, capable of such exertion. Thus, in the pride of mental improvement, and of literary acquirements, we employ the faculties bestowed upon us against the Author of our being and of those very faculties. The misapprehension or misrepresentation of truth, however, does not annihilate it. The proofs of a Deity, and of a divine revelation, are capable of being estimated in their full force only by those who lead their lives in all godliness and honesty, who feel, and are ready to acknowledge, the weakness of their nature, and the errors of human reason, and who thence become humble, candid and docile: who, at the same time that they may have traversed the whole range of philosophic and literary pursuits, do not, therefore, so plume themselves upon their acquirements, as to forget that they are men, and that their knowledge, however extensive, is restricted to a very small portion of the Universe,—to

a mere point in the system of nature. "He who doth my will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." But because some men, of enlarged minds, but apparently of perverse wills, and haughty spirits, do not choose to bring to the consideration of these important subjects that moderation and humility which become such a creature as man, when considering the works of Omnipotence, and are thence occasionally led to spurn the whole, without examination, or without a just examination of its proofs,—it is no just argument against its truth. They had not the due preparation, and therefore could not possibly be capable of weighing the force of the evidence; just as a person, without a proper foundation in preliminary studies, will never arrive at eminence in science,—that is, will never certainly arrive at truth.

"Objections are very easily started to the most serious and important truths, and the objections of a subtle or restless spirit, which may be stated in a single page, may require a volume to answer them; not because they are of any real force; for it is probable their fallacy is seen at once by both parties, but because a variety of important considerations, which the objector has artfully kept in the back ground, are necessary to be stated and taken into the estimate. Indeed there is not a more common talent, one more easily acquired, or which ought to be more carefully avoided by all candid men, than

that of raising objections. It is a faculty of the most dangerous kind, and, if indulged without reserve, would lead to the annihilation of all learning, of all principle and truth, whether scientific or religious. It would doubtless be better, if that were the only alternative, to continue in error, than thus for ever to be passing from one uncertainty to another, and to be thus forever distracting the mind with endless objections. Enquiry after truth is just and proper, and objections stated to erroneous opinions are necessary and laudable; nor will truth finally suffer from any such enquiries modestly conducted. But this we seldom find to be the case with infidels. They reason and object under various pretences; but it is victory, not truth, they seem chiefly to aim at; and they appear uniformly to forget or despise consequences of their reasoning, which are and must be extremely fatal to numerous individuals. Improper enquiries after truth generally terminate in error, and the faculty of raising objections, unless very cautiously used, leads to universal scepticism. These consequences, it is granted, are no ways injurious to truth and certainty, in general, or to those who have strength of mind sufficient to see the fallacy of those enquiries, and the absurdity of those objections. But they are peculiarly fatal, both to the peace of mind, and to the

virtue of numerous individuals, who are not possessed of those powers. The minds of the majority of men, unfit for speculation, are anxious for certainty, and they will rather rest in error than be confused, confounded, and distracted with endless scepticism: —effects which have been uniformly the consequence, and almost the only consequence, of the indefatigable labours of religious sceptics.

" What is truth?—is a question which has been ofted aſked, but very variously determined. The answer is different as the persons, and various as their sentiments. Various, however, as the opinions on this subject are, it must exist somewhere, and our enquiries and conceptions, however various and contradictory, cannot possibly alter it. Truth must be the object of our enquiries, even though she should sometimes elude our grasp. In making these enquiries, however, a certain disposition of mind, very different from that of the modern sceptic, is to be zealously cultivated. We must be disposed to embrace it, wherever it is to be found, and however contrary to our preconceptions, or inimical to our passions and partialities; and where such an honest disposition does obtain, we may almost confidently assert, that the enquiry will be successful. Pride and passion are great enemies to truth, and seldom allow those in whom they predominate to stoop to her

humble level. They excite preconceptions, which allow her no influence, and start objections which she disdains to answer.

" We are told, by some philosophers, that inquirers after truth, however young and uninformed, and however ill prepared for the enquiry, ought to investigate all opinions and all systems, and, from this general investigation, to draw what conclusion they think most proper. But this advice, though it has some appearance of candour and liberality, will be found, on consideration, to be less valuable than probably a first view of it might lead us to imagine. The mind may thus be filled with prejudices and false conceptions, before the judgment is at all formed, and before truth shall have made her appearance; and if that should be the case, as in uninformed minds it generally would, the consequences would indeed be very fatal. For it is a lamentable fact, but a fact experience shows it to be, that error is more congenial to the human mind, than that which, after the fairest investigation, has been determined to be true; and the reason is, that error always allows a greater licence to the passions and appetites than truth. The religion which Christians, on an accumulation of evidence, believe to be divine, has thus strong prejudices to overcome, because it strikes at the root of all those vices which, in our commerce with mankind, we are tempted to commit. It is

therefore not at all to be wondered at, that some few should be found who attempt to oppose this system by objections, by ridicule, and by argument, But, in estimating these, many considerations are necessary to be taken into the account, of which infidels are either not aware, or appear to be careless. It will not be the contemptuous reasoning of young libertines, or of any set of men, under the influence of ungovernable passions, which the religion they despise prohibits, which will with reasonable men have any weight. It will not even be the philosophic clamour of persons better informed, though sometimes perhaps not less culpable, that will stagger a serious man's belief: Because they have evidently and avowedly neglected, in their enquiries and objections, some of the most material considerations. Mr Paine, who, whatever effect his reasoning may have, has confidence sufficient for the whole fraternity, confesses, in the first part of his *Age of Reason*, that he had not then a bible to which he could refer; and, of course, he had no other work on the part of the subject against which he sat down to write. He therefore avowedly formed his opinions on religion, without duly considering its evidences, and went on with his objections, without having it in his power to estimate their force, or to know whether they had not all been made, and completely answered over and over again. The nature

and evidence of the religion he opposed, he could not possibly have it in his power to judge of, in the circumstances in which he was placed; and no man can be at liberty, if truth be his object, to oppose any system which depends on external evidence, and of the propriety or necessity of every part of which, even if it should prove to be true, we can be no judges, by *a priori* or imaginary laws of propriety, rectitude, or probability. These may be after considerations, but they cannot be the first. That Mr Paine should afterwards be confirmed in the opinions he had so unfairly formed, by a perusal of the Bible, as in the advertisement to the second part of his work, he informs us, was the case, is neither new nor uncommon. When opinions are assumed, without maturely consulting evidence, they are often persevered in with the most inveterate obstinacy, in spite of argumeut. People, in this case, act the part of a jealous man, who, from whim or constitutional weakness, takes up his suspicions, and so blinds himself with the confusion of his own ideas as to consider the innocent and artless effusions of love as the genuine proofs of criminality.

" Were infidels, as I have already hinted, to give themselves the trouble (and, in any view that can be taken of it, the enquiry is curious and important) to investigate the several pretensions to divine revelation, which have at various periods been

made, with that candour and attention which the subject merits; and were they to endeavour, not to excite silly objections, and to raise useless and unmeaning ridicule, but to trace these several pretensions to some primitive original, they would do more service to truth and to themselves, than by their general and unmeaning remarks on philosophy and candour, on persecution and bigotry, words they seem to use without any just idea of their import, and which, at all events, will neither constitute nor lead to truth. In the course of such an investigation, judiciously conducted, they would acquire more real knowledge of human nature, and of the history of the mind of man, than random disquisitions in modern philosophy, and unsupported objections to ancient systems, can possibly unfold. From a serious examination of this kind, truth has certainly nothing to fear; but of random objections and crude hypotheses, truth will seldom be the consequence. In the course of an enquiry of this kind, the numerous coincidences in the opinions, customs, and superstitions of the most distant nations, clearly point out a similar origin, and that origin it must of consequence be possible to discover. There is one fact which all the systems which we find existing or professed, in ancient or modern times, take for granted, and proceed upon, and which universal experience shews us to exist;—I mean, the depravity of man,

which the boldest infidel dare not deny. There may be different opinions respecting the origin and nature of this depravity, but respecting its existence there can be but one. In every age, in every climate, and under every dispensation of religion, the bulk of mankind have been naturally depraved. They have ever been more attentive to present pleasures, and to present pursuits, than to the consideration of what is to follow hereafter. They have been ignorant of, and inattentive to, their real destination and their chief good; and, in direct proportion to this ignorance and inattention, they have been depraved and wicked. In the first stages of society, and in barbarous states, the most horrid crimes, at the very mention of which we of this age shudder, have not only been perpetrated, but approved;—and the consequence of false refinement, continued luxury, and sceptical philosophy, has been, to plunge men again into the vices of early barbarism.

"Infidel writers, whose direct purpose it seems to be to degrade the nature of man, and, by annihilating his best hopes, to sink him in some measure to the level of *the brutes that perish*, have seen this depravity, and have, with a strange perversion of mind, and insult on reasoning, endeavoured to trace its origin to the influence of the Jewish and Christian dispensations of religion. Jews and Christians are men, and liable, like oth-

er men, to the corruptions of human nature. They have consequently often been wicked; and, while they have professed a divine religion, have neglected the precepts it enjoins by the most aweful sanctions. "Therefore", say the sceptics, "Judaism and Christianity have taught vice, and have been the cause of all the misery we see in the world, and of all the evil which Jews and Christians have committed." They thus artfully withdraw the mind from considering the evidence of facts, and the nature of doctrines, to the contemplation of erroneous and inconsistent practice; and, because they cannot directly oppose the former, they ridicule and undermine religion, by dwelling on the latter. They forget to bring into the account, or they carefully conceal, the instances, so numerous and so evident, in which religion has been effectual; and they are not aware, or wish not to reflect, that a practice uniformly consistent in every inattentive or careless individual, is more than the experience of human nature gives us reason to expect; and that, therefore, even from a divine religion, no such uniform effect is to be looked for, unless human liberty were totally annihilated.

"To a person who attentively views the various systems of antient and modern superstition, among people civilized and savage, and who considers the numerous coincidences proved between the facts related

in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and the belief of the Pagans in every age and climate, it must appear evident that they had all one original, and that that original was true. It will appear as evident as that the superstition of the Romanists, and other Christians, is founded on the simple facts and doctrines of Christ and his apostles. That they were all (Pagan, Jewish, and Christian) the effect of wild, irrational, and unconnected conceits, without any source in truth, and that the two last were derived from the first, is a supposition of the most extravagant and improbable kind, and totally contradicted by the fair deductions of history. The only rational and consistent account of the origin of things, and of religion, is the Mosaic. By admitting its truth, (and, as a piece of ancient history, it is doubtless entitled to some credit,) the whole affair admits of a very easy and natural solution. If we deny it this credit, we destroy, at the same time, every mode of rational argument, probable proof, and moral evidence. Infidels are so much busied in raising objections, that they have no leisure to attend to such considerations. The antiquity of Moses, however, cannot be disputed; and such parts of his history as in their estimation contribute to blacken the character of the Jews and Patriarchs, they admit the truth of, and expound with all the virulence and animosity of narrow minds. To the account

of the Creation, &c. which they assert to be false, they oppose the absurdities of Sanchoniatho, and of the Eastern Bramins, from which some of them dare to assert that the account of Moses was borrowed.

" Few men, perhaps none, were ever better acquainted with Eastern literature, and particularly with such investigations as I refer the sceptics to, than the late Sir William Jones. He was the most indefatigable and accomplished scholar perhaps of this or any other period, not even *excepting* the *renowned* Dr Francis, or any of his *philosophic* brethren! His researches into the history and religion of Eastern nations were most extensive and accurate, and they were always directed, not to the raising heterogeneous masses of information, or, by detached views, to excite scepticism, but to some useful point and general origin. By comparing the result of his enquiries together, and with what he knew before, he has brought forward additional support of the most convincing kind, to the mass of evidence which before existed, respecting the Mosaic account of the Creation, and of the origin of religion. In the end of his eighth anniversary discourse to the *Asiatic Society*, we find these important remarks, by way of deduction from a long enquiry. " The seat of the first Phenicians," says he, " having extended to *Idume*, with which we began, we have now completed the circuit of

Asia; but we must not pass over in silence a most extraordinary people, who escaped the attention, as Barrow observes more than once, of the diligent and inquisitive Herodotus: I mean the people of Judea, whose language demonstrates their affinity with the Arabs, but whose manners, literature, and history, are wonderfully distinguished from the rest of mankind. Barrow loads them with the severe, but just, epithets of malignant, unsocial, obstinate, distrustful, sordid, changeable, turbulent; and describes them as furiously zealous in succouring their own countrymen, but implacably hostile to other nations; yet, with all the sottish perverseness, the stupid arrogance, and the brutal atrocity of their character, they had the peculiar merit, among all races of men under heaven, of preserving a rational and pure system of devotion in the midst of wild polytheism, in human or obscene rites, and a dark labyrinth of errors produced by ignorance, and supported by interested fraud."

"I am not disposed to trust any part of the defence of our religion to the authority of a great name, nor is it necessary to do so; though, if it were, the catalogue would neither be short nor despicable. The above quotation, however, is important, as it is the result of enquiries totally free and unfettered by system or profession. That part of it which mentions the odious part of the Jewish character, which no Christian attempts

either to defend or palliate, infidels will of course admire. But why they should not receive the other with equal credit, since it is equally an historical fact, they will find it difficult, with all their philosophy, to give a satisfactory reason. Facts are stubborn things; and the most specious reasonings of philosophy must give way to them. We find, on the most unquestionable historical evidence, in a period very remote and comparatively little improved, a people possessing a degree of knowledge and refinement with respect to religion and the Deity, far surpassing that of any other nation. Men may talk of virtue, and philosophy, and science, as much as they please; but, I repeat it, we possess historical evidence for the fact, which, however our modern philosophers may sneer at it, they cannot controvert,—that, whilst other nations were drowned in ignorance, vice, and superstision, this nation alone possessed sentiments,—and such of them as attended to the institutions of their religion, possessed virtue,—superior to the most refined nations of their time. Idolatry, so common in all other nations, though often practised by them from the example of their neighbours, was severely punished, and at length prevented. Yet the Jews, in general, and independent of their religion, were no ways superior to any other people, either in character or science; nor do their historians who relate, without any comment, simple matters of fact, claim such superio-

rity. From whence, then, could arise so striking a superiority in point of religion and divine knowledge? Human science has been considered as the hand-maid of religion; and, had religion been a human invention, scientific improvement must have preceded religious excellence. But the fact is historically otherwise. The Jews never possessed any acquirements, either in science or the arts, superior to other nations. At the time of Moses's mission, they were the slaves of an enlightened people. But slaves are seldom benefited by the science of their task-masters. In such circumstances, there was no room for progressive improvement, either in religion or learning. Slaves are the most abject, and the most ignorant, of human beings; and, whilst they continue slaves, subject to the capricious cruelty of their masters, and to endless labour, it will be found to be a task beyond human power, to improve their minds in knowledge or religion. The most assiduous and successful labours on a few, will be overpowered by the corruption of the rest; and could we suppose, contrary to universal experience, that such improvement would at length become progressive, it could not possibly become general, till after the revolution of many ages. Without any superiority in human science, either real or pretended, and amidst the greatest external disadvantages in which any set of men could be placed, the Jews did entertain notions of religion, of the

deity and of man, different from, and superior, in purity, dignity and truth, to those of any other people, ancient or modern, Christians alone excepted. That such is the fact infidels cannot, and dare not deny. They have assiduously endeavoured, indeed, by confounding the character of the people with the nature of their religion, to mislead our judgement, in investigating the cause of this extraordinary circumstance; and they have most scandalously misrepresented various particulars, in order to palliate their opposition to the whole. But, however much we may despise the general character of the Jews, let us not, like our infidel opponents, imitate their obstinacy. Their history is curious, and may be instructive. At all events, it becomes us, as men and as scholars, to investigate it with candour, and to endeavour to account for the peculiarity of their circumstances, and the acknowledged superiority of their religious acquirements.

" It is seldom that men sit down for the direct purpose of imposing on the world a system of religion or of science, which they themselves know to be false; because they, who are capable of forming such a project, must also foresee the numerous and almost insurmountable obstacles which will obstruct its progress, and the ignominy and ruin which must necessarily follow its want of success. They who labour to propagate

or extend such systems as are really false, are generally first deceived themselves. The cosmogony of Sanchoniatho, and the mythology of the poets and priests of other pagan nations, are by no means to be considered as direct impostures. They are indeed false and ridiculous; but the leading facts and principles, though newly combined, extended by learned labour, and embellished by ingenious description, constituted the general belief of the nations to which these works were addressed, long before their authors were born; and were, if I mistake not greatly, the gradual corruptions of truth, and of revelations really made. It is easy to extend principles already known, and, by taking advantage of general belief, or ancient prejudices, to gain credit to a system newly arranged, but founded on principles sanctioned by common credit from time immemorial. The authors of such systems may likewise be free of the worst parts of an impostor's character; and, whilst they are adding fiction to fiction, and extending the influence of error, they may possibly imagine that they are only amplifying what is true. Such unquestionably is the natural and gradual progress of religious corruption. But though the criminality of those who contribute to this progress be less, the danger of it is probably greater, than that of direct imposture. An absolute impostor must be an abandoned character. He must

have lost all regard to truth, virtue, and moral justice, and he has doubtless some selfish end to serve, for the accomplishment of which he thinks fair dealing inadequate. In adjusting the particulars of his scheme, however, and the mode of its promulgation, even allowing him all the caution and foresight of which human nature is capable, some extravagance, some inadvertency, and want of character, will unquestionably appear, and lead to its detection. If its purpose be to overturn former systems, force must be used, to make its reception general; and, even then, some advantage must be taken of popular prejudices, and a licence and encouragement must be granted to popular passions and vices, to make its influence permanent or durable. The scheme being formed in secret, and founded on deceit, will shrink from all intelligent enquiry, because it will want all rational evidence. However artfully contrived, too, and however contrary it may seem to former systems and prejudices to be, it can contain nothing absolutely new, or which was totally unknown before. Its novelty, therefore, if it shall be found to possess such a quality, must be the effect of a cautious combination of systems before prevalent, and of opinions already known; and its permanency, if it shall happen to be permanent, will be the consequence, not of any evidence, either real or pretended, or of any natural

quality to enforce belief, but of early initiation, and of that laxity of morals which impostures always wink at, if they do not sanction them.

" Impostures are first propagated by the arm of temporal power; and the impostors themselves, led on by the love of increased dominion, enlist powerful abettors of their plan, by the expected rewards of successful imposition. All this, in particular circumstances, may be effected with so much art as to conceal the moving passion from common eyes, and may be prosecuted with so much vigour, as effectually to prevent the resistance of the more enlightened. But amidst the most artful conduct, the character of an impostor will occasionally lead to actions which will betray his principles. He cannot, in every instance in private and in public, be consistent; and though he may in some measure succeed with the vulgar, he will leave sufficient room for others to confute his pretensions. Power once acquired by force, bribery, and fraud, may long be preserved by the same means, and by the encouragement of ignorance and credulity. But an imposture can never gain credit among men who are able to examine its pretensions, and at liberty to reject it, if they think it false; unless among such as are willing to surrender their reason and their judgment, if they are allowed to indulge their passions. No former period could, with a-

ny hopes of success, be assigned by an impostor, in which there was any direct evidence for his doctrines; because if there really had been any such, it must have been known previous to his appearance, and handed down, either by tradition or in writing, or it would lose all its force; and he would certainly appeal to no such evidence in the present period, or before the persons on whom he wished to impose, because his inability of affording any such, must instantly annihilate his credit.

"Though false systems of religion, however, have certainly obtained, and impostors have occasionally succeeded in the world, no argument can thence be drawn against religion in general, or against the disseminators of the true. Indeed it may from thence be deduced, as an incontrovertible maxim, that if there were no true religion, there never could have been a false one; if there never had been an inspired teacher of that religion, there never would have been an impostor assuming the character. If there ever was a revelation made to man, it will follow of course, that the religion founded on it, or proceeding from it, must still exist, and that it is possible to discover it; and its evidence, to those who shall be disposed to pay the proper attention to it, will appear to be as strongly marked, and as convincing, as the falsehood of the others is obvious.

" The period in which any religion, claiming divine authority, is said to have originated, the character of the persons by whom it was first taught, and the state of the people among whom it was first believed, are seriously to be considered. If the people were unenlightened, and in circumstances unfit for, or unpropitious to, religious and scientific contemplation, it would unquestionably afford room for imposture, or for extending and renewing the influence of former systems of superstition. But, on the other hand, if the character of the teachers be uniformly virtuous and consistent, and if the system they profess to be divine, shall be found to contain principles formerly unknown, and to relate facts which were never thought of, and to which nothing similar was ever known to happen, it will afford an instance of intelligence or imagination superior to what is to be met with even in enlightened times, and therefore not to be expected in circumstances less favourable. It will therefore claim attention from its novelty; and if, on enquiry, it shall be found to be generally consistent in itself, and agreeable to the state of nature, and the truth of history, as far as these are known to us; and if, further, its principles, and the facts it states, are capable of explaining difficulties which were before inexplicable, we shall have reason to suppose it to be beyond the power of common genius, on account both

of the novelty and importance of its history and doctrines; and to be free from the suspicion of imposture, from the consistency and harmony of its particulars, and from the simple and ingenuous characters of its teachers. If to these circumstances be added direct evidence adequate to the importance of the subject, and qualified to render it credible;—if this evidence be of such a nature as the people to whom it was afforded could not be deceived in, and with respect to the force and certainty of which they could not be imposed on, the revelation must be what it pretends to be, and the truth of it will unquestionably be proved. A few persons may be impostors, but a whole nation cannot. A few may be deceived, or induced, from various motives, to profess doctrines which they do not believe, and to assert in their defence what never occurred; but a whole people cannot. An ignorant nation may even be hoodwinked and misled, in their religious opinions, and with respect to obscure facts, by a superior genius, if he flatters their prejudices, and indulges their passions and their vanity. But if he appeals to extraordinary actions and deliverances, as performed before their eyes, which were never done at all, and to ancient circumstances of the nation, which they never heard of; and if he promises what he is eventually unable to perform, however loose and however accommodating his principles may be,—he certainly will not obtain credit

for his pretensions; and much less, if his principles and conduct be calculated to controul the predominant vices and propensities of the people to whom his system is addressed. If, further, it shall appear that the person publishing the system, regularly, both in public and in private, performs the duties he recommends to others, and acts uniformly consistent with the character he assumes,—conducts himself on all occasions with such propriety, and so carefully regulates his actions by the strictest laws of morality, that even his enemies, or false friends, worse than enemies, cannot accuse him of any selfish or sinister motive, or of any irregular conduct, it is impossible that he can be an impostor. As he assumes what men cannot naturally assume, and pretends to power and intelligence beyond what men can naturally acquire, he cannot be himself deceived, nor could he, with such ingenuous honesty of character, as we have supposed, deceive others, if he were. With these remarks in our view, it may be worth our while to take a cursory view of the circumstances attending the Jewish and Christian revelations, which certainly have the best claim to antiquity, to sublimity of information, purity of morals, and rational evidence, of any to which we can refer.

"That the Jewish nation is of great antiquity, is a position which no man, acquainted with the history of the world, will

question. The Jews have been a numerous people for more than three thousand years; and, from the first period of their existence, they have been peculiarly distinguished from the rest of mankind, by their customs, their prejudices, and religious sentiments. The revolutions which, in external circumstances, they have undergone, during that long period, are singular and extraordinary, and yet they still exist a peculiar people. The several nations which, one after another, have risen around them to splendid eminence, have uniformly considered the Jews as contemptible and insignificant; and because they acted on different principles from them, and were careless or ignorant of the arts which they professed, and which contributed to raise them to dignity and power, their character has been branded as illiberal and absurd, without enquiry; and the principles of their conduct, and their modes of thinking and of action, have been condemned without being known. These nations, however, like passing meteors, blazed but for a moment, and, subdued by foreign power, or undermined by gradual decay, they have sunk in the mass of mankind, without leaving among their posterity a single trace of former greatness, or of ancient character. But the Jews, despised, misrepresented, and persecuted on every hand, sill remain. Amidst all the varieties of prosperity and adversity, of power and

depression, and during a dispersion which, for more than seventeen centuries, has subjected them, in a peculiar manner, to the contempt, derision, and cruel persecution of the various people among whom they have been driven, they have ever retained, and still preserve, their ancient faith, their national prejudices, and original character. A fact so singular deserves attention. They themselves lay claim to a peculiar origin, and to extraordinary privileges; and, it must be confessed, that the external circumstances of their history have contributed much to support the claim.

" Moses, their first historian, is without doubt the most ancient author whose works have descended to our time. His purpose was professedly to treat of the people of God, and of the dispensations and progress of religion, from the beginning of things to the period in which he himself lived. As far as he goes, he seems to be particularly accurate and exact in the execution of his plan. He is sometimes obscure, but his obscurity is the natural consequence of his brevity, of the antiquity of the language and idiom in which he wrote, and of our ignorance of the manners which he describes. As these, and a variety of other circumstances and sources of information, of which, from the want of other authors, we must forever remain ignorant, were perfectly familiar to his contemporaries, the difficulties which obstruct our

enquiries would not occur to them, and the work would, among his countrymen, completely answer its author's intention. Profane history formed no part of his plan, and is only occasionally alluded to, when the circumstances in which the Israelites were placed, or the nature of his narrative, require such allusion. These allusions, however, as far as the most accurate researches have enabled us to trace them, appear to be particularly just and characteristic, and they therefore afford the strongest possible reason for concluding that his work is genuine and authentic. Indeed the circumstances attending it are, as we shall find, so numerous, and of such a nature, as completely to prevent the possibility of imposture.

" Moses, according to his own account (and in this, at least, there was neither reason nor room for prevarication) was born in the year of the world (according to his own statement of its origin) 2433, after the flood, of which he gives an account, 777; and before Christ 1571, or 3467 years ago. This is prior to the destruction of Troy 380 years, to the first Olympiad 794, to the foundation of Rome 818, and to the æra of Nabonassar 824. Ramesses Miamun, who began his reign in the year before Christ 1577, and who reigned 66 years and 2 months, was then king of Egypt. This is the Prince who, born after the death of Joseph, forgot the good deeds of the Hebrew

viceroy, became jealous of the growing strength of the descendants of Israel, and used every means in his power to oppress them, and to prevent their further increase. Moses was saved for a little while, from suffering under a cruel edict of this tyrant, by the midwives who attended his mother; and he was afterwards snatched from the jaws of death by the king's daughter, and educated as her own son. The name of this Princess, according to Jesephus, * was Thermutis. Artapanes, a Greek writer, in a fragment preserved by Eusebius, † of Cesarea, calls her Meris. He says, that, being married to one of the petty kings of Egypt, to whom she had no children, she was induced, either to conceal or atone for her barrenness, to substitute this Hebrew child; that she called him Moses, which the Greeks afterwards turned into Musæus, and that he was the master of Orpheus. This author had written a complete history of the Jews, which is quoted by St. Clement. ‡ It was thus that Moses became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, then the most enlightened people in the world. Being the adopted son of the king's daughter, he was educated as a Prince, and doubtless with the best founded hopes of temporal advancement among the Egyptians. Ambition, therefore,

* *Joseph. Antiq.* Lib. 11. Cap. v.
† *Euseb. Præp.* Lib. 1x. Cap. xxvii.
‡ *Clem. Alex. Strom.* p. 344.

could not possibly tempt him to renounce prospects so flattering to human pride. Imposture could not be so congenial to a mind thus reared, as to make him hazard his existence for a project at least doubtful in its effect, as every imposture must be. His continuing in the favour of the Egyptian court, if he had been a political schemer, and the prospect of perhaps becoming king of Egypt, was (according to mere human calculations) a much more certain mode of assisting his countrymen, and of extricating them from slavery and oppression, than any other which he could possibly devise. Indeed it is more than probable that his adoption was, for some time at least, of singular service to them. But the oppressions of the king were again renewed in the year before Christ 1531, when Moses was 40 years old. He refused any longer to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and would not renounce his religion, even for the prospect of a crown. Though educated in a Pagan court, he yet professed the principles, and believed in the God of Israel. But he found his countrymen less attentive to their duty than he expected; and his zeal in their cause obliged him to fly precipitately from Egypt. He travelled to Arabia, and, becoming the servant of Jethro, the prince and priest of a colony of Midianites that dwelt near Mount Sinai, in the way between Egypt and Canaan, he lived there

for 40 years; his good qualities having so recommended him to his master, that he gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. In the year before Christ 1510, Ramesses dying, was succeeded by his son Amenophis, who reigned 19 years and 6 months. In the fabulous history of the Greeks, this Prince was afterwards called Belus, the father of Egyptus and Danaus. He is that Pharaoh whose heart was hardened against the Israelites, and during whose reign they left Egypt.

"In the year before Christ 1491, Moses, who never seems of himself to have thought the thing possible, was pitched upon to be the deliverer of his countrymen. This same Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler, and a deliverer, by the hands of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. In the account of the circumstances attending this deliverance, there is nothing which in the smallest degree looks like imposture. The leading facts are certain and allowed. The Israelites, at this period, were numerous. They were in Egypt under cruel bondage. They had been there 215 years. They came thither a mere handful, and were for a considerable time happy and respected. For more than 80 years, however, they had been in circumstances most unpleasant. Yet neither prosperity nor adversity, power nor op-

pression, induced them to mix with the Egyptians, prevented their increase, or led them to alter their sentiments of religion. In Egypt, they were a peculiar people, as they have been ever since, and they entertained even then notions of the Deity widely different from, and very superior to those of the enlightened people among whom they dwelt. When Moses and Aaron appeared amongst them, as the messengers of the Most High, they talked to them in a language to which they were by no means strangers. Their long captivity and severe afflictions had probably blunted their conceptions, but certainly had not annihilated their belief of the God of their fathers. Their joy, therefore, at the appearance of Moses and Aaron, and being told that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, had not forgot them, and would visit their afflictions with comfort, was natural; and this circumstance confirms the account which Moses gives of those Patriarchs. For the Israelites of that age, who were not very distant descendants, could not be so completely ignorant of their origin, as to be imposed on by an idle story, as this must have been, were it false. Joseph they must have often heard of, and he was only the great grandson of Abraham the father of the faithful, and root of their nation. Joseph had died, as would be well known in Egypt, and particularly to his distressed country-

men, only 144 years before the present period, and 64 before the birth of Moses, who now addressed them. Jacob, the father of Joseph and his brethren, who were denominated the 12 Patriarchs, died also in Egypt 54 years before his son. We rise to Abraham, therefore, who was Jacob's grandfather, by steps so plain and obvious, and the circumstances of which must have been so generally known, as effectually to prevent the suspicion of the tale being composed by Moses, as it must have been known certainly either to be true or false, by the people to whom he spoke.

There is nothing in the whole story which savours of that obscurity and distant antiquity ever apparent in impostures. The whole must have been so well known to the most ignorant Israelite of the time, as effectually to prevent the possibility of delusion. They were led, from the very nature of their religion, to attend to their descent. For the God whom they worshipped was called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of their fathers, to whom he had vouchsafed to make repeated promises, when as yet they were few in number, obscure, and in the most unlikely circumstances that their posterity should one day become a great people, and be put in possession of a country peculiarly celebrated for its climate and productions. The language therefore which Moses used to the Israelites,

he neither professed to be new, nor did they esteem it so. They knew their origin as well as he, and they had not forgotten their God. If they had neglected him during the happier period of their stay in Egypt, their present afflictions had recalled them to their duty. The history of the twelve patriarchs, the branches from which they had so lately sprung, and become a numerous people, could not be unknown to them. The knowledge of it would be cherished, because their religion required it. Amram, the father of Moses, who died aged 137, about 23 years before their deliverance from Egypt, was 32 years old when Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, died. Jacob was 15 years old when Abraham, his grandfather, died, and would of course remember him, and what he could not know himself about that illustrious character, his father Isaac would inform him. But, further, Jacob was full 19 years old, when Heber, from whom the name of *Hebrews* is derived, died at the advanced age of 464. He was the great-grandson of Shem, the second son of Noah, and was born 283 years before the death of Noah himself, who died indeed only two years before the birth of Abraham. This brings the history up to the flood. For Noah lived 600 years before that event, and 350 after it;—his son Shem was born 98 years before, and lived 502 after it. These two would be able to carry

back the history of the world to its very beginning. Noah was the son of Lamech, the 9th in descent from Adam, and Lamech was born 56 years before Adam's death, who was the first man. Lamech died 5 years before the flood; so that Noah was born 595 years before his death, and Shem his grandson, 93. Lamech would of course be perfectly acquainted with all that Adam knew, and he would doubtless not fail to communicate his knowledge to his children, of which both they and their posterity would have corroborative proofs, from the testimony of other contemporaries, and from the general belief of their friends and countrymen.

" We have therefore reached,—by a process extremely natural and easy, and by circumstances so detailed, and which must have been so notorious to the Israelites of that time, as effectually to prevent imposture,—to the person whom Moses in his history calls the first man. Some period there must have been, in which the world and man were created; for there is no appearance of perpetuity in either. When man, therefore, was created, it cannot be concluded *a priori* that his creator would leave him to himself; and since the contrary is most generally believed, it is reasonable to suppose that some revelation was actually made, since no probable account can otherwise be given why the idea of such an event having taken place could otherwise

arise. That this revelation has been, in many cases, unattended to and ineffectual, experience shews us; and that such might be the case, if men were left free, was at least probable. When mankind swerved from the duties prescribed to them, there is nothing either harsh or improbable in the idea of their being punished, or of religion appearing with other sanctions, and being confined to a smaller portion; because such a plan would be likely to preserve it from total corruption and annihilation. In all this, however, we must depend not on abstract reasoning, but on testimony and matter of fact. All the reason of which man is or can be possessed, will not of itself discover the origin of the world, or the nature of God. It may assist him in distinguishing between different accounts, but it can of itself afford him no certain information. The first man, who would at his creation find himself a solitary individual, could, from his own powers, discover nothing of the origin either of himself, or of the objects around him. If any time elapsed before a communication was made, he must have waited with anxious impatience till he was informed of circumstances so necessary. His mere animal wants, nature or instinct might lead him to supply. But reason could give him no assistance, in developing things which existed before it. Some communication must therefore have been made to the original parent

of mankind, and such communication would be received as true by his immediate descendants, and would, without controversy, which is of later date, be the rule of their faith and actions, till the avocations of life, and the seductions of passion, obscured and misrepresented it. The powers of man are very bounded, and his passions render them less efficacious than they might otherwise be. If revelation, therefore, from the comparatively narrow sphere of its influence, be thought by infidels to be less useful and efficacious than they would have imagined *a priori*, it can at least be retorted, that its influence has been more extensive than that of any thing which reason boasts as her own; and it must therefore be concluded that it, and not reason, is our natural guide.

" The work of Moses does not pretend to be a complete history of the world. It contains merely the leading facts of that history, and of the nature and progress of religion, till the Iraelites came in sight of the promised land. It was not written for the purpose of removing the doubts and difficulties of modern sceptics, but to be the foundation of a consistent faith to the people of God. The particulars omitted, and the circumstances which prevent or obstruct our enquiries, were supplied to them by channels to which we can have no access; and because things were omitted, or described with

brevity, they would not thence conceive, with the sagacity of modern philosophers, that they never took place at all, or had no existence. That some things have now become obscure, is not at all to be wondered at; because the distance of time, and difference of manners and circumstances, is so great. But such difficulties, far from overturning the truth, enable us to improve ourselves in the virtues it recommends. They afford to us, what is extremely consistent with the apparent plan of Providence, exercise for faith and for humility, in which the patriarch Abraham has shewn us so distinguished an example.

" The whole history of Moses comes to him through a line of seven persons, corroborated by the testimony and the belief of a whole nation. Adam, Lamech, Noah, Heber, Jacob, Levi and Amram. It was not possible to invent such a story at such a time, unless it had been true; nor, if it had been an invention, could it have obtained credit in any nation. No man, living in scenes of life like those to which we are accustomed, could ever have invented any thing so uncommon and unheard of; and still less could this have taken place among a people oppressed with slavery, and unenlightened by science. Accustomed to see men die at so early an age as they do now, and did when Moses lived, who would have hazarded the assertion, that, at a pe-

riod so little distant, and when the falsehood could have been so easly detected, human life was so much longer? Of the flood the same is to be said:—If it never took place, no man, in that age particularly, could ever have thought of any such thing. At all events, he never could have openly asserted it; because, if it did not take place, no trace of it, either in fact or from tradition, would be found; as, if it did happen, must have been the case; and as, in fact, for it really happened, is the case.

"In short, the scheme, if it had been a scheme, would have defeated itself, because the circumstances attending it would have been known to be false. But the Israelites knew the story to be true, and rested their hopes of future greatness on the promises made to their ancestors from whom they received it. From these sources of information, in their circumstances the most certain and unequivocal, they believed that Adam, the first man, fell from the state of innocence in which he was created. Punishments, natural and inevitable in a sinful state, were the consequence. But redemption to those who were disposed to attend to the terms on which it was offered, was promised through a certain descendant of the same Adam; and on the hope of this the religion of mankind rested. Seth, who was born to Adam when he was 130 years old,

was appointed to be the progenitor of this promised Deliverer, and in his family, as distinguished from that of Cain, the murderer of his elder brother, the true religion was to be preserved. By the natural progress of human vice, however, and in consequence of the intermarriages of the sons of Seth with the daughters of Cain, religion was gradually corrupted, and, except amongst a very small portion, almost annihilated. The whole race was then threatened with utter extirpation, unless they repented. Repentance did not follow the threatening, and the denounced punishment was at length executed in the year of the world 1656, before Christ 2348, and before the deliverance of the Israelites 857. Noah, his three sons, and their wives, &c. alone were saved from the general flood. With them afterwards a new covenant was made, and from them the world was again peopled. As population increased, dissipation and thoughtlessness again overspread its inhabitants. The punishment, though so signal and so recent, was quickly neglected or forgotten, and the true religion was only preserved among the descendants of Shem, the second son of Noah. The corruptions of the world at length reached the posterity of Shem, in so much that all ideas of the true God, and of his religion, were in danger of being totally effaced. It was then that it pleased the Almighty Sovereign of

the universe, to single out Abraham, that among his posterity the true religion might be preserved, till the coming of Messiah. New promises were made to this illustrious Patriarch, and, when it was most unlikely, it was absolutely foretold that he should be the father of a great and distinguished people, when as yet he had neither a son, nor the prospect of one. The character of Abraham, so truly great and amiable, justifies the respect that was thus paid to him, and is such as no man could have delineated, if it had not existed ; and much less, in an age so ancient and so uninformed as that of Moses. In the space of 430 years, the promise was so far completed. They were then a numerous people. But they lived in bondage to a foreign and powerful prince, and they had no natural means of escaping from this bondage. Moses was appointed to be their deliverer. In consequence of this commission he came into Egypt, addressed the leaders of Irael in the name of the God of their fathers, shewed, by unequivocal marks of divine power, that he was so commissioned ; and he actually, in spite of the power and malice of the greatest prince then in the world, freed them, men, women, children, cattle, and effects, from their horrid bondage ; and the monarch and his army which pursued them, were totally destroyed, not in battle, for the Israelites were in a situation

incapable of fighting, but by the visible interposition of heaven.

" We will suppose, for a moment, gentlemen, that this is the great nation of Egypt, and that there are among us a numerous body of slaves, to the amount of 600,000 men, besides women, and persons under 20, as was then the case of the Jews. It will at once be granted to be impossible, that any man, coming among this multitude, and addressing them in the way in which Moses addressed the Israelites, should obtain belief, unless they had already been well acquainted with the facts in their history to which he alluded. It would be equally, or more impossible, to make either them or us believe that there was darkness in all the land, except where they lived; that the other plagues took place; or that the first-born in every house, except their own, was destroyed, without any visible cause,—unless such things really took place. It would, if possible, be still less practicable to make such a multitude believe, that they had passed from Leith to Kinghorn on dry ground, the waters rolling backward to admit their passage; and that a mighty army pursuing them was overwhelmed in the pursuit, by the returning waves,—unless they had actually seen it to be the case. No art, no disguise, no method of collusion, of which the most artful man can be possessed, could have induced the belief of a thing so extra-

vagant and improbable, unless they had really seen it. As these things were said to have happened before their eyes, they could not possibly be deceived. A whole nation could not possibly be induced, in such circumstances, to believe a barefaced lie. Neither, from the sate of the case, could they be imposed on in any after age. Monuments of these facts were instituted, and ceremonies in memory of them performed, from the very time in which they were said to have happened. They were not instituted to impose on a nation the belief of things of which they never heard, but to preserve the remembrance of what they had already seen and known; and respecting which, therefore, they could not be deceived.

" After they were freed from the dominion of Egypt, the Israelites went through various trials for forty years, before they got possession of the promised land of Canaan. At length, however, it was obtained, and the promise to Abraham was performed several centuries after his death. After the death of Moses, who lived not to bring them into Canaan, they were governed by Joshua, then by a succession of judges, and afterwards by a race of kings. From this time to the coming of Messiah, a period of very nearly 1500 years, their history is very momentous. It uniformly refers to, and supposes the truth of, what goes before; which therefore is the strongest possi-

ble proof of its truth; and the scene gradually ripens for the developement of farther promises, and the execution of farther judgements. For, with all their advantages, the Jews were a faithless and wicked people, piquing themselves upon their superior privileges, but often neglecting the purposes for which they were conferred. Each succeeding generation saw and acknowledged the errors of their predecessors; but the experience of their ancestors had seldom the proper effect upon the conduct of posterity. They garnished the sepulchres of the prophets whom their fathers slew, at the very time that they were following their footsteps, and persecuting or murdering the prophets of their own time. Respecting what was past, they could reason without partiality. They saw the conduct to be wrong, and felt the effects to be painful. But with respect to themselves, passion and sophistry combined to mislead them. Where passion interferes, the force of example will ever be diminished, and inferences the most direct will not be attended to, or will be keenly resisted. This is the nature, not of the Jews only, but of mankind in general. They cannot bear to be told of their faults; and though willing to allow, because they cannot controvert general truths, they resist, with the most confirmed obstinacy, all particular conclusions. The conduct of the Jews, therefore, though highly to be repro-

bated, is neither uncommon nor unnatural. Attracted by present circumstances, they were innattentive to things of more importance; and with the sophistry so natural to man, they warded off from themselves the censures they deserved, and their erroneous conduct was the consequence of their false reasoning. On account of their numerous transgressions, and their repeated inattentions to the prophets, who were, from time to time, raised up amongst them, to check erroneous conduct, and to pave the way for the expected deliverer of mankind, they were often subjected to the most irksome punishments, till they at length fell under the dominion of Imperial Rome. It was to this period that the prophecies respecting the Messiah most directly pointed; and accordingly the expectation of him was then general and strong. The worldly mindedness of this unfortunate people, however, combined with their uneasy feelings as a conquered nation, led them, in direct contradiction to those very prophecies, to expect in him a temporal deliverer; and such an expectation certainly afforded room for the exertions of an artful and heroic adventurer.

" I shall request your indulgence, gentlemen, for a minute, whilst I read to you the reasoning of Gamaliel a Pharisee, a doctor of the law, and of much reputation among the Jews, upon this very subject.

When the Jewish rulers were persecuting the Apostles of our Lord, for preaching the doctrine of the cross, and, being cut to the heart at their boldness, were taking counsel to slay them, Gamaliel stood up, and said to them:—" Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody, to whom a number of men, about 400, joined themselves; who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought. After this man, rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." The reasoning is excellent, and had the effect been such as the Jewish rulers and modern infidels have most devoutly wished, it would have been considered as conclusive. But the event being contrary to this wish, the reasoning will of course be hooted at as the effect of Christian bigotry. It is however of equal value now, as it would have been then, and, combined with the other circumstances of the case, it is conclusive. The Messiah appeared at

the time he was expected; and though he answered not the expectations of his deluded countrymen, as an impostor would certainly have endeavoured to do, and failed to convince the worldly wise, he completely fulfilled the prophecies which described his coming, and proved that he was the Son of God, by doing such works as no man ever did. With the prophecies in their hands,—which so accurately described him, that he who runs might read, and which so pointedly foretold the very manner of his death,—his unfortunate countrymen were still obstinate, and fulfilled the scriptures, and the measure of their own crimes, at the same time, by crucifying the Lord of Glory. But the malice of men cannot overthrow the counsels of God. The doctrine of Christ spread over the world in spite of opposition, and will continue in it in spite of malice and of ridicule. Apparently mean and contemptible in its nature, and its origin, its progress nothing could controul. "For" says St Paul, "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness: but unto us, which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of

this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence."

"If a man, with this admirable passage in his mind, will take a serious view of the origin of Christianity, consider the period in which it appeared, the means by which it was propagated, and the contempt with which such Pagan authors, as vouchsafe to mention it at all, speak of it; and if he will afterwards reflect with what astonishing rapidity it spread over the whole Roman Empire, amidst the tortures, persecutions, and contempt of the world, he must grant;

at least, that it is attended with the most wonderful circumstances which ever accompanied the progress of any system of doctrine or opinion. If, as Mr Paine, falsely and scandalously, against all historical evidence, insinuates, it had been propagated by the sword, like the faith of Mahomet; had thrown out hopes of temporal aggrandizement, and afforded a licence for common crimes,—some adequate cause could have been assigned for a progress so astonishing. But the case is historically the reverse. Power and persecution were all against it. The first teachers of Christianity, if they merely meditated the subjugation of the world to their own opinions, and their own exaltation on the ruins of other superstitions, certainly, in all human appearance, calculated very weakly. But they were men free from such ambition: and, if they had possessed it, they were too timid, too illiterate, and too narrow minded, to attempt the execution of it. They avowedly, indeed, foresaw, and uniformly told their converts, that they could not, in their own day, obtain any temporal comfort; and, instead of it, they expected what they certainly met with, the utmost distress, contempt, and opposition. They must therefore have had more than human ground to go upon, before they would have opposed a religion, which both they and their countrymen believed to be divine, and have become

founders of another, which effectually baulked the temporal hopes and prejudices of their nation, and for which, in this world, they could look for no reward. They uniformly declared, that the kingdom they looked for was not of this world; and, amidst all their sufferings, and in circumstances the most unlikely, they confidently declared that their doctrine should survive them all; that it should extend to the uttermost parts of the earth; and that even the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Scoffers, and ridiculing infidels, were pointed out, and all its various opponents, even its philosophical, were designed by them in colours evident to all eyes but their own. These opponents of Christianity have existed in every age, and they have been most indefatigable in their opposition. They have opposed it by argument, by force, and by ridicule, and they have, year after year, and age after age, predicted its downfall; and yet we find it still existing, and baffling alike their malice and their sophistry. At the same time that the founders of Christianity foretold the progress of their own doctrines, they predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. The progress of the one, and the preservation of the other, amidst dispersion and cruel persecution, are facts, glaring, incontrovertible facts, which can be accounted for on no probable

or possible principle, but that laid down and believed by Christians.

" If Judaism and Christianity be both impositions, they are certainly, both in their nature, circumstances, and evidence, the most extraordinary deceits which ever appeared in the world: they completely link together, and yet the individual professors of each are keen opponents. The Jews support the pretensions of Christians, even by their opposition. These systems were neither of them propagated by means, according to human calculation, adequate to the effect which certainly followed. The several prominent characters which contributed to their progress, and who appeared in very distant ages, if they were impostors, have carefully avoided, in their plans, the conduct which men in such cases uniformly pursue. Here moreover must have been a succession of impostors, and not one only,—and not one of these has yet been detected in a single instance of any action or sentiment which, fairly interpreted, can give credit to the idea of imposture. If they were impostors, too, it is evident they did not labour for themselves; for the temporal utility of their plans were neither expected nor experienced by them, nor generally till a considerable time after their death. Now, it has not often happened in the world, that impostors are so disinterested to distant posterity, as to procure for them benefits, which, after all,

they cannot ensure, by their own personal sufferings; especially whilst they could, at any time, save themselves by returning to their former station, and by letting their projected imposture alone. But every one of these have, if they were really impostors, laid themselves open to detection, by pretending to the power of working miracles, and by hazarding predictions about the progress and duration of their system, the former of which were believed and attested by those who saw them performed, and the latter of which are in themselves consistent and agreeable to the truth of history, ages after they were published to the world. These men, too, by no means, either in their doctrines, their actions, or their conversation, flattered the vanity, encouraged the vices, or answered the *a priori* expectations of their countrymen. On the contrary, they uniformly opposed them all. A person of tolerable abilities, and of an enterprising genius, at the time of our Saviour's appearance, by taking advantage of the principles and expectations which then obtained among the Jews, might certainly, in all human probability, have made considerable progress in aggrandizing himself, and even in extricating his countrymen from Roman bondage. All who attempted this, however, and some there certainly were, failed in the attempt, and are now no more heard of. While a person,—who completely

opposed the prejudices of his countrymen, and who interpreted the prophecies in a different manner; who, instead of being a conqueror and a hero, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,—not only overcame the prejudices of numerous Jews, but, in a period incredibly short, and by the bare preaching of a few illiterate fishermen, his doctrines were spread over the whole Roman Empire, and still obtain in the most enlightened parts of the world. To these facts, no exertions of reason, no success of imposture, can be opposed. In every circumstance, and in every view, they bear the strongest marks of credibility. The very objections so often started by infidels, in spite of confutation, and so absurdly urged, with all the vehemence of ignorant conceit, appear, on nearer enquiry, to be instances of sincerity and marks of credibility: Because they are generally confessions or relations, or circumstances which impostors would carefully have avoided, or they refer to customs, of which we are ignorant, and of which we can therefore be no judges; or they arise from the obscurity of a dead language, and unusual idiom, in which they are written.

" Did infidels pay attention to some of these circumstances; could they extricate themselves from the phrenzy of heaping up particular and minute objections; could they, like true philosophers, view the system at

large, and independent of the character of particular men, and partial sectaries: and could they make themselves in some measure masters of the subject in debate, and attend to *some* of the answers which have been made to their objections;—could they, in short, so far prevail upon themselves to forego the opinion of the world, and to think a little soberly of their own abilities and acquirements, as to be inclined to embrace Christianity, should it turn out to be true, perhaps their conclusions would be more reasonable, and their candour more evident.

" In short, in every period, and in every climate, to which we can now refer, there certainly have subsisted some notions of revealed religion. There must then have been some original communication on this subject. For none of them could primarily be the natural effect either of imagination or of reason. In a large portion of the world, these notions have been wild and erroneous; but the worst of them are evidently corruptions of original truths. Reason has never, in any of these circumstances, afforded any check to the corruptions of nature. For, wherever false religion has been professed, however much reason might be cultivated, her assistance has been immaterial; and there are only two systems of revelation which, from their principles or effects, are eminently distinguished from the corrupt superstitions and undecided reasonings of men. These systems are in them-

selves consistent. They are, as far as our limited understandings permit us to judge, or to compare them, agreeable to the most accurate discoveries of philosophers; and the local descriptions and historical allusions completely coincide with the investigations of geographers, the observations of travellers, and the truth of history; and both systems have hitherto accomplished all which they pretended or promised to accomplish. Their proofs rest in prophecy and miracles; in prophecies which were actually accomplished long after they were published; and on miracles performed openly in the sight of the world, and of which the people are appealed to as witnesses. The prophecies were so numerous and decided, as effectually to prevent the possibility of imposition or collusion. They raised expectation, and the event justified the prediction, when the prophet was himself no more, and could therefore not contribute to the fulfilment of it. The miracles were notorious facts, of which the people were competent judges, and in which they could not possibly be deceived. These were believed, in the case of the Jews, by a whole nation; and, in consequence of them, a certain form of civil and religious restraint was instituted, to which a whole nation never could have submitted, in such circumstances as they certainly did submit, unless they had been completely satisfied with the proofs which were adduced in its support. The

whole circumstances of the case, neither dark, obscure nor deceitful, cannot possibly be reconciled with imposture. Christianity rests on grounds equally secure, and is confirmed by proofs equally evident and incontestible. The Jewish rejection of this religion affords additional evidence of its truth, because it was foretold; and the preservation of that people, in circumstances the most extraordinary, paves the way for the accomplishment of another prediction, which no human sagacity could foresee, and which no human power can accomplish! When the period shall at length arrive, in which the Jews shall become Christians, there will probably, even then, be found infidels who will deny the conclusion, and perhaps to assert, that the two have all along acted in concert. The murderers of our blessed Lord, mocking the dying Saviour, said, if he will come down from the cross, we will believe. But, had the miracle been granted, it is by no means probable that faith would have followed it. That the plans of Providence should be deranged to satisfy obstinacy, can never be expected. He who is disposed to resist sufficient proof, will never be convinced by any addition to it; and he is indeed a vain and impious man, let his morals or his learning be what they will, who, negligent of what has gone before, expects that he should be particularly singled out as an object of extraordinary favour, and who determines to

reject all evidence, unless he be so. The conversion of the Jews, extraordinary as it will certainly be, will necessarily fail to convince those who have disregarded or despised the proofs already afforded. The same fallacious reasoning, the same unruly passions, the same contemptible pride and overweening conceit, will operate then as now;—it being certain that, if we hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, neither will we be persuaded though one rose from the dead. These, my friends, are serious reflections, and founded on the most accurate observation of human nature; and would to God that they, who boast so much their knowledge of nature, and their eminence in philosophy, would pay that attention to them which their importance demands!

"That Christianity should have had so extensive an influence as it certainly has had in the world, is indeed surprising; that it should not have had more, is not at all to be wondered at. Men are so engrossed with things present, so careless of what is to come, and so apt to postpone all consideration of such matters to some future period, that it is indeed difficult, or impossible, in any large portion of men, to make the many so attentive to religion and its duties, as its circumstances and their own so amply demand. That in such a situation; that with such temptations and avocations, and with so little desire to resist or flee from

them, there should be often found men openly to oppose a religion which so directly opposes, and so completely condemns their conduct, is not at all to be wondered at. But it must be obvious that such conduct, such conceptions, and such opposition, do not, in the smallest degree, affect the truth of the religion which is thus despised, only because it is unknown, neglected, or disobeyed.

" I shall conclude these remarks, with which I fear I have already too long detained you, with another quotation from Sir William Jones, which I wish you to bear in mind, as the unbiassed testimony of a man who, from the extent of his knowledge, and the accurracy of his judgment and observations, as well as from his situation in life, was amply qualified to judge of the subject on which he thus determines: " Theological enquiries," says he, " are no part of my present subject; but I cannot refrain from adding, that the collection of tracts, which we call from their excellence, *The Scriptures*, contain, independently of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books that were ever composed in any age, or in any idiom. The two parts, of which the scriptures consist, are connected by a chain of compositions, which bear no

resemblance, either in form or stile, to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Indian, Persian, or even Arabian learning. The antiquity of those compositions no man doubts; and the unstrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief that they were genuine productions, and consequently inspired."

Mr CHRISTIAN here made many apologies for the length into which the importance of the subject, and his own feelings upon the opposition made to it, had betrayed him. Many things, he said, had occurred to him in the course of the evening, which he had not before intended to introduce, and there were yet many important reflections and enquiries which, for the sake of brevity, he had omitted. His sole purpose was to induce his auditors to think before they allowed themselves to bring forward objections, and to study the subject in debate, before they decided against it. In what he had undertaken he had no end to serve, but the cause of truth; and in what he had already done, he hoped he had not, in any instance, swerved from sober reason and candid enquiry. Learning and reason he neither affected to despise, nor to represent as useless. But their province, he imagined, was limited; and he had never yet found that they, who boasted most of the efforts of human genius,

and the sublime utility of human science and acquirements, had attained to any great superiority over their brethren, who were somewhat more humble in their pretensions. Religion, he was convinced, had nothing to fear from science, justly so called; but truth, he was equally certain, would never be the consequence of that vain conceit, so often and so unjustly dignified with the name of philosophy. In what he had further to perform, he should endeavour to be more concise than he had been on the present occasion; and he presumed, that, with candid and enquiring men, what he had already adduced would enable him to be so.

When Mr CHRISTIAN sat down, there was little said, and the evening being far spent, the society was soon dismissed. Some of the members expressed the greatest satisfaction at what they had heard; others remained in sullen silence, or appeared to be thoughtful; and it was particularly remarked that Mr GOODWILL was the first to leave the room, without saying a word. One gentleman said, that though he by no means wished to impose additional or unnecessary trouble on Mr CHRISTIAN, whose character and conduct he highly revered, he could not help suggesting to him another answer to Bishop Watson, which he had seen since their last meeting, written by one *Macleod*, and which, he thought, it might be worth Mr CHRISTIAN'S while to notice in the course of his next discussion, along with the

work of Francis. Mr CHRISTIAN replied, that of writing answers, and stating objections, there was no end:—but, though he had ever found such books disgusting, from the wildness of their principles, and the ignorant conceit of their authors,—he would, as the gentleman wished it, give the work a perusal, and make such general remarks upon it, as that perusal should suggest.

ACCOUNT

OF

THE THIRD DEBATE.

AT the usual time the Society again met; and, being constituted in the usual manner, it was agreed that Mr CHRISTIAN should go on with what he had undertaken; which he accordingly did in the following terms:

"The uniform and illiberal abuse with which the clergy, as a body, have been loaded, in all ages and in every country, by their infidel opponents, has often struck me with astonishment and indignation. It is a mode of attack in itself so unjust, that no apology can possibly be made for it; and it has been already so hackneyed, that nothing

new or striking can now be expected from it, were it ever so proper. As this abuse, however, contains so much personality, and even, if well-founded, has little, indeed no connection with the main argument, we had reason to hope that it would long ago have been given up; and that in an age, like the present, pretending to such superior knowledge, and such refined liberality, no one would have been found capable of retailing the wild and unfounded aspersions of less enlightened and less liberal times. To the astonishment of thinking men, however, it still forms the burden of the infidel's song. It affords so much scope for their envious malice, that they are loth to part with it, though it is totally irrelevant, and even threadbare. Without this resting place, it is difficult to conceive how they could proceed at all. For, whenever they are at a loss for serious argument, or are unable to get over some serious difficulty, the abuse of the clergy affords them the necessary matter for an episode; and though not always happy in their general reasoning, they have ever in reserve, for the amusement of their readers, a brilliant digression, which they think cannot fail to please. The ground, however, which they thus take is unfortunate for their credit as honest or candid men. They make suppositions and mistate facts, and they reason from these as if they were real: They misrepresent the character of their

opponents, and, from their own wild conceptions of it, they endeavour to render that character ridiculous: And, what is still more unaccountable, and, if possible, more unjust, they connect the character of the clergy, thus abused, with the truth of the religion they profess, and undermine Christianity, through the conduct of its ministers: as if the behaviour of a man, in this age, could alter or affect what happened many centuries before he was born; or as if negligence and dissipation, followed by sedition and treason, on the part of a subject, necessarily and *ipso facto* imply oppression and injustice in the laws. This candid and enlightened mode of argument has been used by every infidel, in every age, of whom I have heard, whose work I have seen, or whose private conversation I have had an opportunity of knowing; and *T. Paine*, *S. Francis*, and *A. Macleod* have in this, as in other particulars, like faithful copiers, most judiciously and carefully imitated the manners of their tribe.

"But why all this illiberal and disingenuous abuse? who or what are clergymen? Are they not men, taken from among ourselves, with this only difference, (and indeed it is a most material one) that they have generally a better education and correcter morals? Is it not to them, or to institutions entirely clerical, that we owe almost all our knowledge, and almost all the science which

has so enlightened and improved us? If these same clergymen (the majority of whom make but a very scanty livelihood by their profession, and many of them not even that) were to turn the learning, assiduity, and abilities, of which they are generally possessed, to other pursuits,—to law, to physic, to politics, to trade, or to agriculture, —would they not, in all probability, in a worldly view, make a better figure, and rise to greater dignity, power, and emolument, than they do in the laborious, and, as the times go, despised, employment of parish priests? From a change, either in the religion or the politics of the state, they have, in general, as little, in a temporal light, to fear, as any order of men under the sun. The large majority of them could lose but little; and, in a new settlement of things, were they to support the change, their abilities, which are undeniably superior to those of any other body of men of equal magnitude, in any country, would doubtless recommend them to at least equal notice. In a political scramble, the probability is, they might be more successful. Many of them could scarce be less so than they are. But, happily for the peace and good order of civil society; for all that is decent, and of good report, it is not for the sake of their incomes, that they profess Christianity, but it is from a firm conviction of its truth, and of its happy influence on

human life and manners, that they labour often for a very scanty pittance in its support. Accordingly we find, that, in those political storms which, raised by the caballing of interested or mistaken men, have brought ruin and desolation on the world, the lowest, as well as the highest of the clerical order, have generally adhered, amidst the mighty ruin, to their professions in happier times; and, when a simple recantation might have saved them from destruction, or raised them to opulence, which they never possessed, they have, with the magnanimous virtue which their religion inspires, spurned the paltry barter of their consciences, and endured persecution in its most horrid forms, or patiently worn out a wretched existence in pitiless exile. Can any man, or order of men, afford more convincing proofs of the sincerity of their professions, or, by a conduct so conformable to their principles, be less liable to the suspicion of hypocrisy? Where bad clergymen occur, and some such must be found in every body of men so numerous, let them be blamed, let them be punished; but let not an illustrious, an innocent order of the community, suffer in their character (which to good men is dearer than life itself) for the faults of a few individuals. Base, indeed, must that man's mind be, who dwells only on the out-casts of the society, and who, by exhibiting the faults and foibles of the weak and the abandoned,

endeavours to obscure the virtues, and to impede the utility, of the more enlightened and respectable. The clergy feel it to be their duty to recommend morality, and every virtue of which human nature is capable, by the sanction of a religion which, on the firmest grounds, they believe to be divine. Is it just, is it liberal, because they are zealous in the discharge of this duty, that they should be considered as bigots? or, because they are paid for the performance of it, that they should be accounted hypocrites? Must not every man, according to the order of things which exist, and ever has existed in the world, live by his profession, unless he has inherited a competency independent of all personal exertion? And must those exertions for a livelihood, which are ever praiseworthy in others, be considered as blameable only in men, who, for purposes the most important, and from convictions the most strong, deny themselves many of the pleasures and amusements of life, from a principle of duty; and who, submitting often to a laborious penury, conscientiously execute the office they have undertaken? By being the ministers of Christ, and the instructors of the poor, (who, without them, have scarce any other means of learning their duty, or acquiring knowledge,) they do not surely forfeit the common rights of humanity. When they become the servants of Heaven, they do not

cease to be men. Immense sums of money are, without a murmur or complaint, wasted on players, mountebanks, and numerous denominations of impostors; on luxurious trifles and empty gewgaws,—What reason then can we have, to complain that the clergy have some recompence for their labour? The labourer is ever worthy of his hire; and few, perhaps none, have shewn themselves more worthy of recompence and respect, than they whose income is thus envied, and whose office is thus unjustly ridiculed. Their education is tedious and expensive, their office laborious, honourable, and useful, and their promotion precarious and uncertain. The property they possess does not belong to the public, but to themselves alone. It has been acquired in as equitable a manner; has, without controversy, been possessed by them for as long a period; has been used by them with as much propriety, and is therefore held by as just and firm a tenure,—as that of any man or order of men living.

"The clergy stand as it were upon an eminence. Their virtues, however, are often, by the very nature of them, concealed from public inspection; and, generally, when they are known, they are considered as mere matters of course, or as the necessary effects of a particular mode of life; and therefore, as unworthy of particular notice, or of distinguished praise. Their foibles, their vices,

and their errors, on the contrary, are seized on with avidity, and exhibited to the public eye with malicious envy and unjust comments, by men who, (I do not hesitate to assert, because the assertion is capable of the most rigid proof,) are the enemies of all that is virtuous, of all that is honourable, and of all that is praiseworthy, and who oppose the clergy with such unjust virulence, only because the principles and exertions of that body have hitherto prevented their licentious conduct from becoming general, and the distinctions of virtue and vice from being totally confounded. To a man who views, with an impartial eye, the history of mankind, the mild nature and tendency of the Christian religion, the progress of science, and the consequent improvement of human happiness, and who considers how much of this improvement in science, and in happiness, we owe to the indefatigable labours of clergymen, the abuse thrown upon that order by Thomas Paine, Samuel Francis, A. Macleod, and their predecessors and abettors, will appear to be worse than illiberal; because, with injustice, and the most barefaced falsehood, it unites the blackest ingratitude. Instead of being the last to admit improvements in science, or to entertain liberality of sentiment, it is to men of this profession, almost entirely, that we owe the first efforts of invention, and the gradual dissemination of knowledge and refinement.

It is to their superior intelligence, or to the happy application of their talents and their leisure, that we owe almost all that we now so much value ourselves upon,—improvement in learning, and the sciences,—in the arts of life, and of civil government. It is not to the petty scribblers on infidelity, those empty boasters of philosophical profundity, that we owe such advantages, but to the clergy, and to those whose minds they have tutored to the love of science. Look into the annals of the most enlightened and improved nation upon earth, (England) and see if you can find one infidel in the list of celebrated scholars, of able statesmen, or of distinguished improvers of any art or science. The enquiry will compell you to acknowledge, that the list is made up entirely of clergymen and of their scholars; that it is to their exertions, abilities and conduct, that England owes a large proportion of that character and importance which she holds among the nations of Europe. The history of almost every other state will furnish ample evidence of the same fact. But, because they have hitherto in this nation, (thanks be ascribed to the Sovereign Ruler of the universe) successfully opposed the progress of licentiousness in politics, and of infidelity with respect to religion, they are calumniated by the wild abettors of rebellion and atheism, with the odious, but happily unjust, epithets of bigotted and hypo-

critical shallow thinkers, unfair reasoners! because, in some periods of the history of the world, many clergymen have been bigotted, superstitious and even licentious, must they still be branded with the same odious character, unless they totally give up the faith which they know to be divine; and allow the world to be driven about with every wind of doctrine, which the cunning craftiness of men may devise? A little knowledge of human nature, which even their philosophy might have taught, or perhaps a little honesty, which is more creditable than learning, would have enabled the opponents of Christianity to draw a more candid, and probably a fairer conclusion on this subject, than they have yet done. Clergymen, like other men, of every order and description, are liable, and must ever be liable, to be misled by the temper of the times, if that happen to be erroneous. If the general temper of any age or nation be allied to bigotry, to superstition, to licentiousness and persecution,—in the name of common sense, how can the great body of clergymen avoid the infection? Is it candid, is it just, to compare their principles and practice, in such circumstances, with those of a more liberal and enlightened period;—or to judge them by a standard of which they had no practical knowledge?—No, surely; they can only, with justice, be compared with men of other professions, and of

different pursuits in their own time, and, from such a comparison candidly made, the character of clergymen has nothing to fear.

" That the first teachers of Christianity should, from the proud rulers of the world, meet with contempt and persecution, is not to be wondered at. They gave no quarter to vicious practice or erroneous belief; and they neither could, nor did expect, compassion or candour from their proud and vicious opponents. " Remember (said their master, in one of his last conversations with them) the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me, before it hated you." Persecution, contempt, and insult, then, were the necessary and expected consequences of their exertions in disseminating the religion they had learned, as they and we think, from divine authority, and in opposing the superstitions and vices of a corrupted world. But that their successors,—an order of men who now, for so many centuries, have devoted their time and their abilities to the improvement of science, and to the dissemination of religion and morality; who have, in their several generations, been shining lights in the world; and who have contributed most essentially to the furthering the best interests of mankind,—should meet with the same contempt, opposition, and, where it is pos-

sible, persecution, is far more unaccountable, because less to be expected. But they, too, know whom they have trusted, and are firmly convinced of the faithfulness of Him who hath promised to assist them, in the execution of their office, not only against the pernicious ways of those, by reason of whom (as was long ago foretold) the way of truth shall be evil spoken of, but even against the gates of hell and the powers of darkness. For therefore do they both labour and suffer reproach, because they trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. Their good offices, which have been most important, and are almost innumerable, have, by their unworthy opponents, been overlooked or misrepresented, only that the religion they profess might be brought into discredit. These reproaches, and this injustice, they have suffered with fortitude, endured in silence, or treated with just contempt, as the impotent railing of vicious and ignorant men, happy that they are accounted worthy to suffer in the same blessed cause with their Divine Master and his first followers. Gratitude is a heavenly virtue; and if any order of men, as such, deserve the gratitude of their fellow-men, it is the clergy. But it is a virtue which attains no strength in little minds, which never was, and never can be, combined with malice and disingenuity.

This abuse, so illiberal and so undeserved, with which the clergy have, in every age, been loaded, (and in no period more than in the present) affords, to that most distinguished order of men, one, amongst many similar, proofs of the truth of the religion the care of which is peculiarly committed to them. "If they were of the world, the world would love his own; but, because they are not of the world, but God hath chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them." Comparing them with other men, and impartially reflecting on the advantages mankind have derived from them, such a return was certainly not to be expected. But when we seriously compare the event with the prediction, and the whole with the circumstances and views of the men who, from age to age, have opposed and ridiculed them, we shall be better able to account for it; and though we may still look upon it with surprise and indignation, we shall at length be compelled to conclude that human nature is ever the same, and that this fact affords one more instance of human depravity, of human obstinacy, and of divine foreknowledge. The followers of the humble Jesus, the teachers of his pure morality, and the supporters of his divine religion, cannot, when we come further to reflect on the subject, be candidly judged, or justly esteemed, by the vain cultivators of human reason, by the bold and im-

pious opponents of all that is serious or manly, virtuous or sacred: Nor can it be expected that their actions, however laudable; their abilities, however distinguished; and their beneficence and candour, however eminent, should be allowed their full force and just praise,—by men to whose principles and conduct they are so directly, and happily as yet so successfully, opposed. It is only to be regretted, that men, and those not a few, who have not entirely renounced Christianity, and who even wish it will, have given countenance to this unjust railing, and added force to its baneful effects, by joining in the unmeaning laugh, and by retailing the unjust and impious slander of infidelity.

"Something I thought it necessary, gentlemen, to say upon this subject; because the scurrility of the authors you have put into my hands, exceeds all the bounds of decency. I have been warm upon it; and by honest and honourable men,—who have themselves suffered from the insolence of malice, or the misrepresentations of ignorance and conceit,—my warmth will readily be forgiven. More I could have said; but with ingenuous men, more would be needless; and to those of less amiable dispositions, it would be but speaking to the wind, or like casting pearls before swine. I have only to regret that this illustrious order of the community have not found an abler advocate.

" It is not a little remarkable, that, whilst the opponents of Christianity allow themselves thus lavishly to bestow upon the Clergy, and on Christians, the most odious epithets, and the most scurrilous abuse,—all opposition, however temperate, all answers however cool and candid, appear to their distempered minds as the effect of bigotry, superstition, and even as indicating a wish to persecute. An infidel may do or say what he pleases; he may use language of which an inhabitant of Billinsgate would be ashamed, but in him it is all fair. He has, in his own opinion, philosophy—he has science, on his side; and, though scurrilous and intemperate as language will permit, he confidently palms his scurrility and intemperance upon the world, as the genuine effects of a sincere love of truth; of a manly, enlightened and philosophical freedom of thought; and of a just indignation and honourable warmth against bigotry, superstition, and the persecuting spirit of his opponents. The warmth of a Christian, on the other hand, though tempered with all the mildness of the most beneficent system of religion which was ever taught, is estimated in a different manner. His answers, however cool and however masterly, are considered as the artful defence of a hypocrite, or the weak excuse of a bigot; and his warmth, however justifiable, as downright persecution. Were a plain honest man,—

unacquainted with quirks of the party, and with the bare-faced effrontery with which they bring forward their calumnious charges, and who had never seen *Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible*, or heard of his Lordship's character,—to read what Dr Francis is pleased to call *Watson Confuted*, he would certainly conclude that the Bishop of Landaff is a weak unworthy bigot, alike ignorant of his profession and of general science; that the Apology is a wild libel against common sense, and the first principles of knowledge; and that it was written to excite the minds of the people to a violent persecution of atheists and deists. How unjust all this is, neither you, gentlemen, nor the public, who, in spite of the illiberal jargon of Dr Francis, and his friends, judge of characters and actions with some regard to truth and justice, need be informed. Mr A. Macleod, with more apparent caution, leads us, by insinuations of most obvious tendency, to no very different conclusion. He preserves, or pretends to preserve, some degree of respect for the Bishop of Landaff; but the whole of his brethren, bishops, priests, and deacons, experience from him the most intolerable scurrility which perhaps ever dropped from the pen of any infidel, except Thomas Paine and Samuel Francis. One would imagine that these three champions of infidelity had all experienced the most violent persecution which human

beings ever suffered, and that they had written their venomous remarks in the short and uncertain intervals of respite, and in the horrible expectation of further severity; or that they had dictated them as a kind of *memorabilia* amidst the excruciating tortures of the stake or the wheel. Dr Francis commences his personal insult and abusive remarks, in the advertisement, and continues them, with little intermission, to the end of a work which is certainly calculated to confer little credit either on his head or his heart. To follow him through all the dirt he has thus raised, would afford but a sorry entertainment for you, and is a labour for which I feel myself neither inclined nor qualified.

" Bishop Watson has said, that it would probably have been fortunate for the Christian world, had the life of Thomas Paine been terminated before he had fulfilled his intention of writing against Christianity; and he seconds his remark by adverting to the baneful consequences which must follow the annihilation of religious principle in the minds of the bulk of the people. This enables his intelligent and candid opponent to raise a violent dust " about the clerical passion for the extermination of the heterodox," the intolerant spirit of Christianity, and of clergymen, " about the dogmatical dictates of bigotted priests, passive obedience, and the persecuting mandates of in-

quisitors," and to declaim on the mild spirit of reason and philosophy, now rising to enlighten the world, and humanize the mind, but which is unfortunately still confined to infidels alone; and, after stating the ignorance and malice of priests, &c. and the miseries the poor infidels have suffered, with the firm conviction that infidel science and moderation will soon overpower the errors and vices of the Christian superstition,—he adds, "Now, sir, we have grown bolder; knowledge being no longer confined to clerical seminaries, priests are not kings. The church totters; and a single pamphlet, you say, has unsettled the faith of thousands. *Now that you cannot stifle reason, you pretend to liberality of sentiment.*" The good Doctor is probably a little too confident respecting the success of his opinions, and perhaps expects a wider and more rapid progress than experience will justify. He doubtless hopes that the good work which Thomas Paine has recommenced, will be materially forwarded, if not completed, by himself; insomuch that in a few years it may be said there was once such a thing as Christianity. A man is certanly at liberty to hope what he pleases; and the expectations of the Doctor and his friends, need neither alarm nor confound any serious Christian. We shall, on the contrary, hope, what is at least more in unison with past experience, that his expectations will be frustrated, and that

Christianity will exist long after T. Paine, S. Francis, and A. Macleod, have gone the way of all flesh; and very long after their ill advised writings have fallen into the oblivion which they merit, and from which it would have been happy for the authors, and for many ignorant and unsuspicious members of society, if they had never emerged. The remark of Bishop Watson, which excites in the mind of his opponent so much causeless animosity, and so many unjust inferences, is calculated, from the way in which it is stated, to give offence to no human being. To wish for the death of an enemy, or opponent, from a principle of revenge, is (I will not say *unchristian*, for that my friend the Doctor would laugh at, but) inhuman. But since death is common to, and must be the fate of all men, sooner or later, it is not only not cruel, but humane, to wish any person or persons removed from the world, before they should have it in their power to perform an action, which must not only injure themselves, but their fellow men, in their most essential concerns. I have often heard the fondest mother say, (and I have ever felt the justice of the saying,) that she would rather carry to the grave the son of her warmest love, than live to see him guilty of a mean or unworthy action. Death, to an innocent and upright man, has nothing in it that is dreadful; but life and death are alike horrible in expec-

of a divine origin; of which the doctrines are sublime, and the duties simple; and which is calculated, if duly attended to, to produce the most happy effects in this world, whilst it affords the most comfortable prospects in another. If we enjoy prosperity, it teaches us to use it with moderation, that we may enjoy it; if we meet with adversity, it enables us to bear it with patience, and to turn even distress into advantage. In every situation, it impresses on our minds what universal experience confirms, that this is not our resting place. If we are happy, it affords us the prospect of an increase of happiness, without end and without alloy: If we are afflicted, it comforts us with the assurance, that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory that shall then be revealed to those who love God and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. These comforts may be enjoyed by every Christian, and have been felt by thousands in every age.

Cloathed in the artless simplicity of historical narration, recommended and rendered familiar by the persuasive influence of example, and enforced by the mild but determined authority of Him who knows what

is in man, without abstract reasoning, and logical deductions, so often the parents of obscurity and scepticism; and without controversy, oftener still the source of prejudice and error,—Christianity is calculated to enlighten, improve, and elevate the meanest understanding; and yet, in the principles it unfolds, and in the practical importance of the duties it enjoins, it surpasses the keenest efforts of human intellect,—the most accurate deductions of human science. Simple, obvious, and unperplexed, in the mode of its communication, and in the nature of its sanctions, it yet affords, to those who will attend to it, the most sublime and effectual philosophy; the most enlarged, accurate and interesting views of God, of nature and of man, which were ever conceived or taught. To the poor is this gospel preached, and by the poor as far, as is necessary for present improvement and for the attainment of future glory, it may be understood; and yet it affords scope for the efforts, and excites the admiration, of the finest human genius. Its duties are obligatory on all ranks of men, and its doctrines and principles are calculated alike to astonish and improve the ignorant and the learned; to encourage the humble, and to resist and confound the arrogant. O pitiable reflection, that we should be negligent of information so important, and careless of duties so conducive to our happiness and

improvement! that we should allow the malicious mouth of infidelity to accuse such a religion of inefficacy, and, from the conduct of too many amongst us, to brand it with principles which it never acknowledged, and with crimes which it abhors! But the impious insinuations, and unjust conclusions, of unbelieving opponents, and the no less dangerous and culpable conduct of too many professed Christians, affords no just argument against the power and goodness of God, or against the general beneficence and final utility of that religion which he has been pleased to give us. Millions have already been rendered happy, beyond the power of human expression, by faith in its doctrines, and obedience to its laws; and millions will yet experience its happiest influence, in spite of the baneful example of its lukewarm and guilty professors, and the malicious efforts of its avowed enemies.

"It was no ignorant or unlearned man, who said, that he counted even gain to be loss, and all things as dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord; and thousands in the age in which he lived, when Christianity was most derided and most depressed, enjoyed the same happy tranquillity, the same resigned submission under affliction, the same cheerful humility in circumstances more prosperous, and the same enlivening hope in the pro-

mises of the Redeemer. It is surely important to attain to so blest a state of mind. *The things which are seen are temporal.* We know that human happiness, in its utmost extent, is transitory; that sensual pleasure is vain; that human life, though, at the utmost stretch, it is not very long, is also uncertain; and that the best enjoyments which it affords, are liable to be dashed from our grasp, by circumstances which we cannot foresee, and to be marred by misfortunes which even foresight cannot prevent. *But the things which are not seen are eternal.* They are such as no untoward accident can shorten, no unfortunate circumstance can destroy. The Christian can see his happiest prospects on this side the grave fail, and yet preserve his tranquillity, because he knows that the happiness of eternity will do infinitely more than make amends for the sufferings of humanity. He can even experience the shipwreck of all his temporal enjoyments and expectations, and yet he grieveth not as one without hope;—nay, if such should be his fate, he will be able to look upon the wreck of universal nature without emotion, because he was before convinced that this was not his abiding place, and now perceives the actual approach and final consummation of his most anxious wishes. Trusting in the protection of Him whose wisdom directs, and whose power controuls the general confusion, he

fears nothing, even amidst the crash of falling worlds; but, according to the Eternal's promise, looks for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, where doubt shall have no place, and sin and misery shall be unknown. Can philosophy, can human science, can any system of infidelity, or any temporal pursuit, afford an equivalent to this? No:—What is philosophy, what is science, what is any thing we can know or enjoy, when disjoined from God, the centre, and object, and author of all? It is vain conceit, it is impious unmeaning jargon; conceived in vanity, and supported by impotent pride, its end is disappointment and vexation. The heartfelt satisfaction, the calm tranquillity, the sure and certain hope resulting from Christian obedience, and religious faith, never calmed the perturbed breast of infidelity, never restrained his passions in prosperity, nor sustained him under the pressure of adversity. Speculative science, which may or may not be true, and which, however certain, is difficult, and to most men impossible, to be attained, stoops not to the humble level of active life. It is in its own province useful; but it wants the sanctions with which virtue must, in this world, and in our circumstances, be supported, to render it an effectual rule of life and manners. "Let us with caution, (says an illustrious statesman,) indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintain-

ed without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education, on minds of a peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles."*

" Cruel, then, is the endeavour of the infidel, to despoil us of what can alone confer happiness in this world, or comfort in the hour of death : Crueller, still, when we reflect, that he substitutes nothing in its room, but the variable and uncertain deductions of unassisted reason. If it is granted, as by deists, (and as is the case, whether it be granted or not,) that there is a God, and that he is just, and good, and merciful: But if it be as they contend, that he has left the world entirely to itself and mankind, without any certain rule of conduct, but what may be deduced from reason, which experience shews us to be variable as the persons who profess to follow it are numerous, there can be no doubt but that in the future life which deists say they expect, the humble Christian, who thinks he has so much reason for believing Christianity to be true, and who consequently submits to what he conceives to be divine authority, will at least be as certain of acceptance as the haughty deist, who peremptorily refuses

* Address to the people of the United States of America, by General Washington, on resigning the office of President.

to submit to any rule of conduct, which his reason or his pride has not suggested; who conceives himself able to scan the secrets of Omnipotence; and dares to contend with Heaven itself in wisdom and in virtue. Indeed, this position few deists think it worth their while to deny. It is the general policy of the tribe, in order to quiet their own just apprehensions, to represent God as unboundedly merciful, while at the same time they are so forgetful of his justice, as to presume that all religions and all systems are indifferent to him; and that he is regardless of those very laws which he has himself ordained. Christianity comes recommended to us by innate majesty, and external proof; and, amidst the variable and unsupported deductions of speculatists, and the absurd systems of the ignorant and superstitious, affords us a sure and certain hope of future reward, and a fixt rule of moral and religious conduct. Uncertainty is of all evils the worst; and, as it is most uncongenial to the nature of man in active life, we may fairly conclude, that the rule of human conduct, appointed by the Deity, is definite, such as may, in its principles, be obvious to the meanest capacity, and in its duties alike obligatory on all. Christianity is such a system, but we know of none other. It is fitted for all capacities, for all situations of life; and affords to all men a certain, definite, and adequate rule of conduct.

" Had reason been ordained to be the sovereign guide of human actions, we should never have heard of any other guide, real, or pretended ; and its decisions and inventions would have been certain and definite in every age, in every situation, and in every circumstance. On the contrary, we find, in fact, that nothing is more variable or more indecisive. One comes forward, and tells us that reason has discovered to him the being of a God, the evil of vice, and the advantage of virtue : that this life is the prelude to another, in which they who reject the deductions of reason, and are vicious, shall be punished, and in which they who follow its dictates and are virtuous, shall be rewarded. Straitway comes another, who tells us that a great part of this representation is false : that the God of reason is careless of human affairs, and indifferent to human actions : that virtue and vice are arbitrary, unmeaning terms ; and that, if there be a future life, no distinction will be made between those whom we denominate virtuous and vicious ; it being contrary to eternal justice and immutable right, to conceive that the nature of endless existence should depend on the conduct of the short and uncertain period of human life. Another follows hard after, and asserts, that there is neither God, nor angel, nor spirit : that all that we see, all that has been, and all that is, are the effects of blind unimpassioned

chance; and that total oblivion will be the end of all intellectual existence. The variety of intermediate modifications by which these opinions are recommended to public notice, is infinite: Alike indefinite and absurd, they depend on the whim of the moment, on the temper, the art, or the passions, of the person who is pleased to conceive and to divulge them. By some, the Deity is represented as corporeal; by others, as a mixture of matter and spirit; by others, as a nice chrystallization; by others, as a pure spirit, and by others as nothing at all,—the creature entirely of a disordered intellect and a superstitious imagination. O lamentable state of corrupted nature! O matchless impudence of puny mortals! The most wretched superstition which ever obtained in any nation, which ever disgraced the human understanding, or shackled the powers of human reason, is infinitely preferable, in fact and in effect, to this indefinite and detestable farrago.

"Reason, used as the humble handmaid of religion, and as the mistress of science, is useful, is distinguished: Exalted by human pride as a judge over the universe, and its omnipotent Creator, it degenerates into the curse of human life, the bane of human virtue; and, consequently, the destroyer of social and individual happiness. Urged by a restless and dissatisfied spirit, supported by pride, on the one hand, and followed by vice,

on the other, it swerves by little and little, from less to greater, from better to worse, till universal scepticism, vice, and confusion, are the sad consequences. Here a position is modestly assumed for the sake of argument; there it is confidently referred to as proof; and deductions, of the most alarming kind, are artfully made from what never was, and never can be proved. It is no wonder that the pious Christian laments and deprecates the progress of such reasoning; that he sighs over the depravity it produces; and that he fervently wishes that such daring blasphemies, and dangerous deceits, had been withheld from public inspection, even by death. He knows, that, by uniform obedience to the duties of Christianity, he shall enjoy as much happiness as this world can possibly afford; and, even should his faith turn out to be vain, that his situation in the next will at least be equal to that of the haughty infidel. But, on the contrary supposition (which is so much more probable, which is certain) that Christianity is true, the infidels case can hardly be expected to be parallel. In this world, he can neither enjoy the tranquillity nor the hope of the Christian; because, in this world, its pleasures and its profits are his all. His situation, in the next, if he expects or believes a future life, must be uncertain and obscure. God is merciful, but he is also just. This world is our state of probation, in which He

displays most amply his long-suffering, mercy, and condescension. The next opens a different scene, and will be the state of reward and punishment. What the Deity has condescended to promise, they who shall attend to the conditions, will most certainly receive. What He has thought proper to threaten, though He may seem to delay the execution of it, He will also with equal certainty perform. These reflections, and the fears which they suggest, the infidel will doubtless sneer at, as narrow-minded and chimerical; but, though serious, I consider them as salutary; and I lament and wonder that they do not sometimes affect the minds, and appear in the reasonings, of the opponents of Christianity. An unjust fear of prejudice may lead to error; an over eager desire to appear courageous, and to acquire the envied fame of heroism, may end in foolhardiness, infamy and ruin. A wise man, when he has the choice, will certainly never resign certainty for hope, or hazard the loss of all a wise man ought to hold dear, at a single throw. In any view that can be taken of the subject, the infidel can finally gain nothing, and he may actually lose his all. The system or systems of reason he pretends to follow,—and which he so keenly recommends to others, as far as they can be judged from their own nature, or their general effects on those who are guided by them,—appear to be calculated, by under-

mining the purest grounds of human virtue and enjoyment, to annihilate all individual comfort; and, by unhinging the strongest bands of civil society, to pave the way for universal ruin, devastation, and bloodshed. If there is no God and no future life, of what avail is all our knowledge, all our philosophy, and all our acquirements? If there is, how important is our conduct here? How consolatory is such an expectation, how peculiarly valuable, when it is founded, not on the variable and inconclusive reasoning of man, but on the direct revelation of Almighty God? To an enlightened mind, no reflection can be more truly gratifying than this, that whilst it is improving in knowledge and virtue here, it is laying up a stock for futurity, which shall then be improved beyond the present conceptions of the most intelligent mortal. The thought of annihilation is dreadful to all, but to those who are drowned in vicious indulgence; and the more cautiously modified creed of the Deist is not much more consolatory, certainly not more useful, to the generality of men. Scepticism, however modified, and infidelity, however cautiously unfolded, will never, among the bulk of men, materially differ, either as to principle or in effect. When men are seduced by temptation, overpowered by passion, or misled by vicious example, the powerful enemies of reason and virtue, small and inconsiderable will be the

restraint imposed upon them by the religion which depends on the slender and variable thread of human investigation. The laws of the supposed religion of nature will quickly be accommodated to the vicious propensities of man; and, instead of being considered as vicious, those propensities will be dignified with the appellation of natural, which, with the generality, will serve as a sufficient cloak to hide their baneful qualities, and to obscure the lesson which might be drawn from their degrading consequences. But from these general remarks, (for the length of which,—though to those who have perused the books which have suggested them, they will not, I trust, appear irrelevant,—after again appealing to your candour) I shall now descend to particulars.

" Mr Macleod wishes to impress on the minds of his readers a high opinion, not only of his candour, but of the depth of his understanding, and the power of his reasoning faculties. He praises the stile and manner of his antagonist's work in the highest terms of panegyrick, and tells us, that he has set an example to philosophers, which he is ambitious to imitate; an example not less brilliant, than it is amiable and inviting." To his doctrines, however, he cannot subscribe. " Curious man (says he) on a subject of such importance, requires even more

than soothing or meek expressions to establish his belief. He soars to the summit of history, and, looking back on ages of credulity, marks the progress of intellect and truth." This exordium is grand, but the sequel is most humiliating. He tells us that he writes to receive instruction, and, at the same time, to explode the Bishop's mistakes. He then defends Thomas Paine, though he allows that, by the influence of his books, he has contributed to untie the affiliating knot of society; and, in a strange, incoherent, and unconnected manner, he proceeds to give us a most gloomy account of the progress of intellect and truth, to which he had before so splendidly alluded. After laying down the axioms of scepticism, which, however pleasant they may be to the mind of an infidel, appear to me to be most unnatural and degrading, he concludes, that we are "so formed, that we war against our natures, when we petulantly assert either the truth or fallacy of abstract principles; and that, even within the range of local and personal experience, we may frequently misapprehend the most obvious truths, and therefore that, doubting our own judgments, we question those of others." If this be a just, it is certainly a most melancholy account of the nature of man, and of his attainments; and this consideration should surely have prevailed with the candid and philanthropic author over his desire

of information, &c. to allow his fellow-men to go on in the way to which they have been accustomed, since it is at least more consolatory, and since, on his own principles, he cannot *certainly* afford them a better. But, happily for man, it is an account which universal experience confutes, and which therefore the avowedly undetermined reasoning, and petulant assertions, of A. Macleod, has little chance or tendency to establish. Men act, and they uniformly act, on the contrary supposition; and, where passion does not interfere, on firm conviction and fixt principles. They may be sometimes wrong, but experience shews, that it is the nature of man so to act, and experience will confute a thousand sophisms. Indeed, were he to proceed on other principles, he would never act at all. With convictions or motives to action, fleeting and uncertain, his conduct must necessarily be indetermined, or entirely passive, and his life must consequently be miserable.

" Anxious to catch at whatever affords the shadow of an objection, our author cannot let slip even the introductory remark of his dignified opponent, where he says to Thomas Paine, " I think it not inconsistent with my station, and the duty I owe to society, to trouble you and the world with some observations," &c. In this sentence, I should presume, no candid man would find any thing reprehensible; and Mr Mac-

leod, not choosing as yet to throw off the mask of assumed candour, whilst he insinuates, that these words are " the offspring of a professional pride, and that they inculcate a superiority in rank and fortune over talents and virtue," artfully states his objections as coming from others, and affects to defend the character which he thus maliciously attacks. So artfully indeed, in this part of his work, does he endeavour to conceal his *cloven foot*, that, to an unwary reader, he might appear really to be a Christian; and when we compare this affected modesty with the dreadful scurrility, which we meet with in the succeeding pages, we may fairly conclude that he esteems this as a master-piece of policy. Our illustrious philosopher next proceeds to comment on that remark of the Bishop, on which we have already dwelt so long, respecting the death of Paine. This affords him an excellent opportunity for declamation on the investigation of truth, the laurels which await the victors in the dispute, and on " the inbred superiority reason ever preserves above the errors and prejudices of man;" and he sagaciously concludes, that though Paine and others may have unsettled the faith of thousands, and of necessary consequence rendered them vicious and miserable, yet " truth will, in the end, stamp her precepts on their minds, and bring her convictions home to the feelings of mankind; which

will impenetrably fix the basis of the triumphant doctrine." In other words, let mankind, ignorant and unfit for such speculations, as the large majority of them ever have been and ever must be, be continually harassed with opposite opinions and contending factions, imposed on by the cabal of infidels, distracted by the din of politics, and opposed by the reasoning of the divine, and the duty of the magistrate,—and truth must be the consequence. In short, leave every man to the freedom of his own will; neither oppose his opinions, nor restrain his actions, and science and virtue will be the grand result: The inbred superiority of reason will assert itself, and infidelity will triumph. It is indeed certain, that if the divine and the magistrate sit silent, and careless spectators of the scene, the progress of infidelity will be rapid; but the experience of ages proves that licentiousness will be equally so. Let the calumniator of all that is sacred go unopposed, and the infringer of the laws unpunished, and atheism and turbulence, ruin and desolation, will quickly raise their direful heads, and act their aweful tragedy in the sight of the sun. But if this inbred superiority of reason does really exist, as infidels inform us, they must at least grant that it has hitherto been a latent quality; and, when it has occasionally been asserted, its consequences have never, amongst any considerable portion of men, been such as we

should expect from a natural attribute of the human mind. The Christian believes that human nature has been corrupted; that man's ideas of right, and his powers of reason, have consequently been obscured; and therefore that some positive institutions were necessary to prevent the worst consequences of this corruption and obscurity, and finally to restore him to the rank from which he fell. Universal experience, independent of all particular proof, pleads strongly for this opinion; and the inbred superiority of reason, if it should exist, since it certainly has never yet obtained its superiority, has no great tendency to confute it.

" The next remark of the Bishop which attracts the notice of Dr Francis and Mr M., and which draws from both much ill nature and misrepresentation, is, " that the Age of Reason has rooted from the minds of the unhappy virtuous all their comfortable assurance of a future recompence." Connected as this remark is, in the Bishop's book, an ordinary reader would not readily have misconceived it; and an honest one certainly would not have misrepresented or cavilled at it. But it has long been the policy of infidels to misconceive the plainest sentences, and to misrepresent and obscure the most indisputable facts. Such cavilling supplies them with matter, when they would otherwise be at a loss, and when they are unable, or unwilling, to bring the main sub-

ject to a fair issue. It affords them also a strong argument for their beloved scepticism; because, as they pretend, they hope the world will give them credit for honesty of intention, and lay the error, if error it should be deemed, to the score of their reason. The Bishop evidently means that the principles of those he calls virtuous have, by the misrepresentations of infidelity, been cruelly perverted; and therefore that, ceasing to be virtuous, they have become unhappy: That their assurance of a future recompence, which afforded them comfort in every situation and vicissitude of life, has been staggered or destroyed; and that therefore they are liable to be misled, corrupted, and depraved, by every dangerous doctrine, and every vicious practice. Dr F. asserts that the pious are few in number; that they are not easily misled, because they will not read the books of infidels:—" but, should chance lead them to a detection of their errors, they would only become less devout, and more useful citizens. Freed from the prospect of hell and heaven, they will have leisure to think of this world, in which they live somewhat like hermits, loving only their priests, and ready to sacrifice victims to credulity." This is a strange sentence, and looks more like the ravings of a subject of Spain or Portugal, than the reasoning of a native of the British empire. *They would only become less devout and more useful citizens.* Does

this exhibit any extraordinary knowledge of human nature; or is the sentence which follows it either candid or just? The devout and pious Christian is the most useful, as he is certainly the most peacable citizen. His duty is the effect of divine sanctions, and he looks to futurity for his final reward; but, as his religion produces individual virtue, so it promotes social happiness:—"Do to others as ye would they should do unto you," affects every situation and regulates the conduct of every sincere Christian. Is it the way to improve this utility to annihilate such principles; to tell men that this world is their all; that their conduct has hitherto proceeded from a source absurd and false; and that futurity and retribution are mere chimeras? The experiment were madness, and its success would be deplorable. I here argue, you will observe, on the idea that the Doctor understands the words, *devout and pious*, as they are uniformly understood by Christians, as comprehending every principle, and every duty which unadulterated Christianity lays down and enjoins. But the learned and candid Doctor does not appear thus to understand them. His mind is so impressed with popery and the rack; and he seems to have been so exclusively conversant with ignorant bigots, or debauched hypocrites, as to conceive it impossible for Christianity to be believed and practised in the simple purity in which it

was originally taught. As justly might he characterize the human species, by describing an untutored savage; or assume an opinion of the British nation, from a knowledge of the wretches who suffer at Tyburn. That many Christians are and have been grossly wicked is certain; that some established systems of Christianity have occasionally afforded too much room for human depravity, is equally true: but that this is the effect of the religion itself, or the necessary consequence of its promulgation, is false; as every honest man,—who has read the new testament; who has coolly considered the effect of this religion, when it was first taught; its general influence on the human character, ever since, when compared with other systems, and other times and circumstances, and its particular happy influence on numerous individuals, in every country where it is professed,—must acknowledge. Mr M., on the other hand, amuses his readers by exhibiting his talent for verbal criticism; and, having said all he could on the expression *unhappy virtuous*, &c. he proceeds to draw conclusions, and abundantly dogmatical these are, from what he has either really misconceived, or wilfully misrepresented. To follow him through all the dirt he has thus raised, would afford little gratification either to you or me; and it is perhaps more than such barefaced dishonesty, and such pertinacious opposition,

merit. After declaiming on these words through more than four pages, and drawing every conclusion from them but the just one, he proceeds to tell us, that " Mr Paine, and those who think with him, may contend, That, had the religion of Jesus been an heavenly ordination, no human influence could ever root, nay, not even stagger, the Christian's belief. As immutable as God himself, would the doctrines of Jesus be—then, now, and for ever! and even his moral precepts would have equally resisted change," —and he supports this strange doctrine, by referring to the *chapter of the universe*; but his arguments are not more intelligible than the position they are brought to support. The doctrines and the morality of Jesus are certainly the same they ever were; and will ever, in spite of the reasonings and the follies of men, remain the same. But that a person, who has once assented to the truth of Christianity, and who has for some time governed his conduct by its laws, may afterwards, through evil communication and bad example, renounce the principles and practice of his former life, must be granted from every idea that we can have either of God or of man. God is himself an immutable being; but man being a free agent, may turn from evil to good, and from good to evil. Religion assumes and possesses no other power over the inclinations and the actions of men, than that of informing their minds,

affording them the principles of virtuous action, promising them rewards for obedience, shewing the evil consequences of vice, and threatening punishment for disobedience. There is set before us virtue and vice, life and death; the inestimable advantages of the one; and the deplorable wretchedness of the other; and we are left to make our choice. Inert matter may, and must be subject to general and determined laws, and possesses no power to elude these laws. —Mind is also subject to fixt and general laws; but as mind is different from body, and possesses in itself a certain degree of energy and power, these laws must be different, in kind and in effect, from those applied to matter,—different as mind is from matter. The law of mind is this: Such a line of conduct will ensure certain advantages in this world, and much superior and more certain enjoyment in the next: Such another mode of action will produce a train of evils in the life that now is; and will incur more certain and extensive wretchedness in that which is to come. Such, in short, are the general laws to which mind is subjected. There are no exceptions: there is no mutability. It is the province of mind to attend to these, and to make its choice; and, having done so, it must abide by the consequences. No power can controul these laws, or elude their effect, but He who can controul the universe, and all that it con-

tains; who stills the raging of the sea, and quells the madness of the people. It is strange that any man, at this time of day, should delude himself, or attempt to delude others, with such a notion as that I am now confuting: It is still more remarkable in one, who, a few pages before, writes in so high a stile of the *inbred superiority of reason.* What has this superiority produced? What stability has it attained in the revolution of so many ages as have passed since the creation of man? Do not elude the question, by saying that superstition has opposed it: such could not have been the case, had any such superiority existed. No, let us confess the truth,—what universal experience proves, however dissagreeable it may be to our feelings, or hurtful to our pride. Man does possess reason, but his nature has been depraved, and his reason has been obscured; and thence rendered unfit to restrain his conduct, to point out his duty, or to regulate his actions. Religion has dispelled the obscurity into which the depravity of our nature had plunged our reason; and though unfortunately much, too much depravity still exists, experience has universally proved, and still shews, that it alone has power to restrain, in any effectual manner, the vices to which we are liable; that it is our only barrier in this world against all that good men most dread, and our only comfort when we look forward to futurity.

" Christianity claims a divine origin, and it supports the claim by proofs which cannot fairly be disputed, and which it is not easy even to elude. But it pretends to no controul over the freedom of the human mind. It first addresses our reason; and, when that is convinced, it is intended to direct our faith and conduct. Its truths are no where pretended to be impressed on our minds by the finger of the Deity, but they are not less divine than if they had been so. Nor is it quite so clear as Mr M. imagines, that impressions made by the Deity are *immutive*. For though He may, if He pleases, impress truth upon the human mind, we have no reason to believe that He will so change its texture, as to annihilate its freedom, or prevent the exertion of its own free will. The disobedience of Peter, therefore, and the apostacy of Judas, have not the smallest tendency to corroborate the temporality of Christ's office, mission, and life, as Mr M. asserts; and they only prove that man is so completely free, and unhappily so very perverse, that he may, and often will, from the most sordid motives, resist the clearest demonstrations of divine power, and the plainest dictates of moral duty. Peter became disobedient, from fear for his personal safety; and Judas an apostate, from the sordid love of money. Similar motives have often produced similar vices, and they will often do so again. But such vices afford no argument

against the religion which forbids and which will one day punish them. Mr M's reasoning, then, proceeds totally from misconception, or from an entire ignorance of human nature; and his appeal to the material works of God is futile and absurd; because, from what obtains with respect to matter, nothing can be deduced concerning the conduct of mind. Yet, were it worth our while to dwell longer on a notion so obviously misconceived or mistated, we might probably discover various instances in which the works of nature are controuled by the exertions of art; in which effects are produced which nature seems never to have intended; and which, without controul, she would not have produced; and in which effects are prevented, which, if she had been left to herself, would certainly have followed. Our controul over nature and her operations, is certainly very circumscribed; but if it exist in ever so minute a case, Mr M's appeal is of little service to him; and, even though it should be found not to exist at all, our having no controul over matter, will not hinder us from having a power over our own minds.

In the succeeding paragraph, our author again sounds the praises of reason and her powers,—"Vigilant and sage (he tells us,) she penetrates the mist, and lays, sometimes with unsparing hand, the impostor and his craft equally low." This splendid

sentence affords him a nice opportunity of apologising to Bishop Watson, whom, he says, he does not mean to rank with *impostors and fools;* and he takes occasion to introduce a most illiberal philippic against Bishop Horsley, who, it seems, is not only an impostor and a fool, but, in plain terms, a barefaced knave. But I will neither offend your feelings, nor my own, by retailing the impotent slander of an obscure individual, against a dignified and respectable character. Of Bishop Horsley's character, indeed, I know nothing particular. He is said to be a profound scholar and a sound divine; and, I believe, he proved himself to be so, beyond the reach of cavil, before he was promoted to the important dignity which he now holds. Personal abuse is always unpleasant, illiberal and suspicious; but the scurrility so often indulged in the present work against the Bishop of Rochester, and, through him, against the rest of the clergy, exceeds almost any thing of the kind I ever read. The extreme virulence of the attack, however, will completely defeat the purpose the author meant to serve by it. Had he been more cautious and reserved, he might have been more successful; but, having so grossly betrayed his ill-nature and his pique, every honest and candid man will turn from him with contempt, and even suspect the credit of his most cautious representations. But this is the way in which Mr M's rea-

son, *vigilant and sage*, penetrates the mist, and lays, with *unsparing hand*, the impostor and his craft equally low. Did circumstances permit, I doubt not but his hand would be really as unsparing as his pen has been ;—but, happily for this country, reason, vigilant, sage, and unsparing as she is, has not yet attained this dangerous pre-eminence ; and, whilst she continues to amuse herself by penetrating the mist which she herself raises, she will be at least comparatively harmless.

" To a man accustomed to understand the language of his country, as his countrymen generally do; who, regardless of sophistical refinements and logical subtilties, seeks only for truth, and who judges of facts and things according to their general acceptation and evident tendency,—the obstinate perversion of language, and mistatement of facts and things, which we so often meet with in the present day, must be truly astonishing. Nothing is so plain or so true, but we now find its sense confounded, and its obvious tendency perverted. Reason is turned into scepticism, liberty is transformed into licentiousness, patriotism is compatible, and often conjoined, with treason and sedition ; and Christianity is so artfully confounded with the crimes or the prejudices of some of those who profess it, as to be represented as not only false and su-

perstitious, but as the cause of the most flagrant crimes; and so peculiarly modest and candid are some of its opponents, that even the crimes of those who have renounced it, and who persecute even unto death all who profess it, they lay to its charge.

"The French Revolution (it has been thought by some of the ablest reasoners, and some of the best men) affords a dreadful example of the effects of infidelity on national manners and social happiness. The system of Christianity which was established in France, was certainly very corrupt; and many of those who professed it were much more so; but whilst it directed the faith and opinions, it restrained the conduct of the large body of the people within some bounds: there was much vice, but there was also some virtue. The labours of infidel philosophers, for many years previous to the late convulsion, gradually undermined the established faith, and, by artfully confounding the essence of Christianity with some of its adventitious errors, and with the faults of some of its professors, they deprived a large portion of the people of the comforts, and freed them from the restraints, of all religion. The effect was such as might have been expected. The turbulence of irreligion, and the licentiousness of vice, spread like a mighty torrent, and at length, favoured by numbers, would submit to no controul. The infidel party soon seized the

reins of government, and have exhibited the most tragic scenes that Europe ever witnessed. The astonished world have beheld the aweful convulsion with fearful dismay, and will long remember, with mingled indignation and regret, the progress and the crimes of that wretched sect. Dr Francis and Mr Macleod, however, with their usual candour, lay the whole blame of these dreadful events on Christianity and the clergy, and they adduce the crimes of Henry the VIII. and Cardinal Wolsey, the massacre of Protestants on St Bartholomew's day* the per-

* Whether it was ignorance, haste, or design, that led Mr M. to mistake, or mistate, several notorious facts, I do not know; but, by reciting together a few of his blunders, we may be enabled to estimate, in a proper manner, the nature of infidel accuracy. In p. 27th, in enumerating the crimes which I have just mentioned, he writes, *the massacres at St Bartholomew*, instead of ON, or OF *St Bartholomew's day*. In p. 20th we find these words: "To men like the latter, (he means Bishop Horsely) we owe much of that Hotspur persecution which has so blackened the annals of the SEVENTEENTH century" In p. 25th he says: "His followers (meaning those of Jesus Christ) in the SEVENTEENTH century of his religion, instead of being equally magnanimous (he means as their master,) flatter the vices of man from the pulpit and in the senate." From these passages I think it appears, that, by the 17th century, our author means the *present*, which by every other body is *generally reckoned the eighteenth*. In p. 65th he writes thus: "In the reign of the Stuarts, a plot was discovered, which had for its object the destruction of *James the* SECOND and his Parliament." No one needs to be informed, that this happened in the reign of the

secutions of Queen Mary, the riots in London in 1780, and those of a later date at Birmingham, as parallel instances of Christian depravity; and therefore they contend, that the

first Stuart who reigned over Great Britain, or *James the* FIRST of England, and SIXTH of Scotland. In p. 202d he has these words: "Had *Charles the* SECOND consented to the reiterated wishes, had he attended to the successive admonitions, of his Parliament, Oliver Cromwell had died the remote admirer of princely generosity; but Charles was a tyrant, and Oliver, encouraged by other tyrants, raised the Commonwealth on the ruins of the Crown." All the world knows that *Charles the* FIRST was the sovereign martyred by Cromwell. These errors appear, if possible, still more extraordinary, when we return to p. 110, and read as follows: "A strange *acquiescence* it would indeed be, did your readers admit that a writer of the history of England would be justified in assigning two reasons, the one absolutely contradictory and absolutely false, for the Parliament s ordering the 5th of November to be observed as a day of public solemnity and rejoicing. The only true reason, and that is authenticated by the corroborating testimony of all our historians, is, that "on that day the vigilance of King James had delivered the nation from a bloody intended massacre by gunpowder;" and a writer, who, having those testimonies before him, should assign it to the arrival of King William, would justly be accused *of a design wilfully to deceive his readers.*— But this is an unimportant point; only it serves to shew, that *we may* be hurried into false deductions by a warmth of zeal." It is lucky for us that Mr M. has not thought of becoming an historian;—for, from the above specimens, and from this passage (intended as it would seem, with a shew of candid censure, to account for prevarication in the historian, and scepticism in the reader) he appears to be but ill calculated for such an office. Men are not in general burdened

exertions of Thomas Paine and his coadjutors to annihilate, in the people of this country, all religious principles, and all future expectations, either of reward or punishment, will have no bad effect on their morals or their conduct. It is sincerely to be lamented that the conduct of too many, who call themselves Christians, is such as not only cannot be defended, but must be abhorred.

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with such a warmth of zeal as to be thus hurried into false statements and false deductions, respecting plain matters of fact in which they are not interested. Men frequently *misrepresent* facts, when such misrepresentation is calculated to serve a purpose; but, unless a man is very negligent indeed, he will very seldom be *hurried into absolute falsehood.* In the case instanced, it is indeed true that the 5th of November was appointed originally in commemoration of the discovery or prevention of the gun-powder plot; but it may also with justice be said, that it is kept in memory of the Revolution, though it was certainly not originally instituted on that account. The 5th of November 1788 was kept, both in England and in Scotland, in commemoration of the Revolution. In writing an account of this festival, therefore, an historian will be naturally led to tell the story as it is, not to assign two reasons, *the one absolutely contradictory and absolutely false*, for its appointment; but he might tell us, that, though originally instituted on account of the former, it is also observed in memory of the latter; nor would it be absolutely contradictory or absolutely false, to say, "That King William landed in England on the 5th November 1688, and the people of that country still annually commemorate his arrival on that day." Indeed, it would depend very much on the nature of the writer's narrative, whether he mentioned the one reason or the other, or them both combined. Other instances of Mr M's superior accuracy will occur afterwards.

But such men, though they went out from us, are not of us; and their profession, so lamentably contradicted by their practice, will be of little service to them in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and when every one shall be judged according to his deeds. Bishop Watson has said, and, in spite of the objections of these his opponents, I think he has said truly, that the crimes of Christians are not to be charged to their religion;—and the reason is obvious; because their religion not only does not sanction any crime, but forbids even the mental conception of them; and that, too, by the most aweful arguments. These arguments, though, from the general depravity of man, they have not been universally successful, have nevertheless in every age produced much of that virtue for which they are calculated; and where they fail of success, it is certain that no other arguments or motives will succeed. Now, if a set of men come forward, and, by insinuation, address, and open calumny, attack the religion which thus restrains, within decent bounds, a numerous people, and which produces more exalted virtue in numerous individuals, what will be the natural consequence, provided these insinuations and these calumnies succeed? The religion they have hitherto professed they have believed to be divine; and they have been restrained from many crimes, which no

human eye could see, and no temporal punishment could reach from the aweful consideration of an omniscient Judge,—of the punishments he has threatened to inflict on all those who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,—and of the rewards he has promised to those who obey him in purity and godly sincerity. If these considerations will not restrain men from evil, and excite them to active virtue, and general holiness, it is difficult to conceive what other sanctions or considerations will. It is certain, because experience has made it so, that if these notions be weakened or destroyed, by infidel cabal, the consequences will be most fatal to society; and virtue and truth, though the pretended motives of infidel exertion, will be the last things to which the public, thus deluded, will attend. Confounded and distracted by opposite and contradictory statements,—by a cry of superstition there, a cry of virtue here, of rights and liberty, and private judgement, they will in the end believe nothing; and, with no principle of conduct, they will act as without God in the world, as caprice or temptation shall determine. Such, gentlemen, I know, and such you also must know, are the only consequences that have yet resulted from the Age of Reason, among such unfortunate men as have attended to, and been deluded by that ill-advised writer. The vices of mankind are, even in the best circumstances, too nu-

merous ; but they proceed not from religion, but from the want of it. Infidelity and atheism, however modified, and however by their votaries exalted, have uniformly increased the licentiousness to which we are naturally so prone, and have uniformly ruined every people among whom they have obtained. France, I think, affords a modern instance sufficiently remarkable ; and I shall instance Greece as an example from antiquity. " What seems to have had the largest share in bringing decay and humiliation on the Grecian people, was, *the fatal prevalence of atheistical tenets*, which, for above a century, had been spreading from the Epicurean school through every part of Greece. It was the wish of Fabricius *,— when told by Cineas of the opinions which Epicurus was then propagating,—*that they might be adopted by the enemies of Rome!* The event did honour to the wisdom and foresight of this virtuous Roman. The baneful doctrine completed the ruin of Grecian manners. Naturally volatile, of a sceptical turn, and, from the arts of refinement and elegance which were familar to them, prone to dissipation and pleasureable indulgences, the Greeks but too eagerly embraced a system that levelled all religious restraints, and left them without a God to inspect human actions. The consequence was, what

* See *Plut. in Pyrrho.*

in the like case it will ever be. We have it from Polybius *, who was an eye witness, that venality, fraud, treachery, an utter disregard of country, of the most sacred oaths, of all ties whatsoever, human and divine, crimes which indicate, in the strongest manner, the corruption of a nation, and are the surest presages of its ruin, soon became prevalent throughout most of the states of Greece. The Acheans seem to have been the only exception. Possibly, as they were a plainer people, and less conversant in philosophical researches, the contagion had made less progress among them." *Gast's History of Greece, p.* 643, *&c.*

" The subsequent remarks of our two authors, to the end of their first letter, are so desultory, so incoherent, depend so much on bare assertion, and are in fact so absurd, and so little to the purpose, that it would occupy more time than I have to spare, and would require more patience than I presume you are disposed to bestow, to put the whole in such order as it might be understood. But this is not the period in which any thinking man will be staggered or confounded by virulent assertions,—for reasoning there is none. There is no solid argument against the truth of Christianity ; the whole is a violent libel against Christians,

* See *Polyb.* lib. 2. cap. 45. lib. 6. cap. 54. 55. lib. 12. cap. 1. and lib. 13. *de virtutibus et vitiis.*

who, if we would believe the atheistical Doctor, and his deistical coadjutor, have, except the Jews, been the most abandoned wretches who ever disgraced humanity. The profound physician, after a variety of irrelevant matter, round assertions, and violent abuse, acknowledges that his opponent's conclusion against Thomas Paine, in his first letter, is perfectly fair, and he gravely adds,—" But let me ask your Lordship, what you conclude against one, who, like myself, is not a Deist; and repeats, with the first philosopher of the age, that *the causes of the Universe neither possess benevolence, nor any other passion.*" An Eastern poet has made a remark upon this subject, which, were the Bishop inclined to answer this question, he might probably repeat,—" The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, and become abominable in their doings: there is none that doth good, no not one." For my part, I should liken the Doctor's conduct, in the present instance, to that of a foolish, petulant fellow, who,—on hearing a person warn another against debauchery, by informing him that his dissipation must inevitably end in disease and premature death, —should ask, But what have you to say to me, who am about to finish the business at once by poison, the pistol, or the dagger? Though the Doctor, however, has thus contributed his mite to the total destruction of all virtue, by at once annihilating its source, he confi-

dently tells us immediately afterwards, that were character 'the discrimination and the palm given to that religion that has had the greatest number of honest men, the Christian system would certainly lose the contest.' And though Mr M. does not just acknowledge himself an atheist, in this assertion, he fairly joins hands with his excellent friend the Doctor. These candid writers, jumbling all the religions together which were ever professed, and all the superstitions and absurdities, which, under the name of religion, have disgraced and misled the human mind, and drawing for the most absurd and pernicious system of all, have both, wonderful to tell, without connivance, lighted on Christianity as this one! It is difficult to believe either the one or the other to be serious, in the frightful representation they give of the most pure, the most consistent, and the most efficacious system of religion which was ever taught. If their assertions, inferences, and remarks, which are conceived in a stile not a little peculiar, and urged with a vehemence which it will be difficult to defend, have proceeded from ignorance, it must be wilful ignorance, and therefore in the highest degree criminal; because the slightest attention to history, to the nature and circumstances of mankind, as connected with the subject in debate, and sometimes even to the construction and general acceptation of common language,

would have enabled them, if seriously disposed to embrace the truth, to perceive their falsehood and futility. To me, indeed, in the passages to which I allude (and both works are full of others of a similar character) they appear to exhibit symptoms, by no means equivocal, of an oppoſition determined against all conviction, and sometimes to indulge, with a complacency not to be envied, a degree of malignity to which, as there could be no temptation, there ought to be no reply; and in oppoſition to which, as far as concerns the authors, at least, reasoning will generally be useless. To men of happier dispositions, however, we may, I trust, appeal from the dictatorial language, and unjust insinuations of Dr F. and Mr M. on a subject which they seem never seriously to have studied, and which they certainly do not understand, with better hopes of success. If such men, with that dignified candour and honest love of truth, which even these writers delight to praise, will take the trouble of consulting the history of mankind in every period, under every dispensation of religion, and under every system of superstition, they will find the passages in question to be as false and malicious, as they are daring, inconsistent, and improbable ; they will find, that mankind, naturally averse to serious reflection, impatient of religious restraint, and prone to vicious indulgence, have ever sunk

into peculiar wretchedness, depravity of mind, and corruption of morals, when they have accidentally lost, or gradually neglected the knowledge and the revelations of the Lord Jehovah: And, finally, that in situations where the doctrines and duties of religion have resulted chiefly from the unassisted exertions, the unrestrained inclinations, or the natural conceptions of men, the system has ever exhibited a wretched mass of traditions and reasonings, equally obscure and absurd, with no rational origin, consistent detail, or useful tendency.

" I deem it not only probable, but certain, from the most unequivocal of all modes of inference, that the various superstitions, and false or absurd systems of religion, which have appeared in the world, have been gradual corruptions of, and deviations from, a system pure, consistent, and divine. This position, which rests upon the incontrovertible maxim, that whatever is must have had some adequate cause, and that every imitation must mediately or immediately be derived from something real, is further confirmed by the consideration of the origin, progress, and effects of idolatrous worship, and of all those systems of religion which both we and our opponents agree in denominating false. The first revelation, which, for reasons already stated, must have been made in the very infancy of the human race, continued not long in purity.

Its influence, at least, was soon confined within narrow limits; because, as men increased in numbers, they were gradually seduced, by temporal avocations, by trifling or vicious pursuits, till they lost sight of their origin, as communicated by their Creator, of their dignity as sons of God, and of their hopes, as heirs of immortality. Sensual gratifications, or temporal pursuits, too easily and too generally withdraw attention from subjects of far superior importance. Irregular conduct, verging gradually to the highest degrees of moral turpitude, slowly, but surely, tends to blunt all our perceptions of religion, and at length totally to annihilate all our feelings of duty. Thus, in early times, the light of revelation appears to have dwindled among the bulk of men into a mere spark, which, being at length combined with a multiplicity of human errors and inventions, followed by principles the most corrupt, and conduct the most debased, became scarce distinguishable by the keenest eye.

" Idolatry arose in a period so ancient, and soon acquired an influence so extensive, that it is difficult, or impossible, from the want of records, to state the precise time of its origin, or accurately to mark the particular steps of its progress. In general, however, it is certain, from the uniform testimony of all antiquity, that it first appeared in Egypt and Phœnicia. This is the opi-

nion of Eusebius *, who had examined the subject with much accuracy, of Lactantius †, and of Cassian ‡. Vossius, in his remarks upon Maimonides's treatise concerning idolatry, says, the testimony of all the ancient Pagan writers places the matter beyond a doubt. Without mentioning Diodorus, and several others, it may suffice to quote *Lucian de Dea Syria*, who absolutely asserts that the Egyptians were the first who honoured the Gods, and paid them a solemn worship; and Herodotus, who, in his history, book 22d, says " the Egyptians are the first who knew the names of the 12 great Gods, and from them it is that the Greeks learned them." He likewise tells us, that they are the first who erected altars to the Gods, made representations of them, raised temples to them, and had priests for their service, wholly excluding females from the priesthood. Never was any people, continues he, more religious. This author, the most ancient of the Greek historians extant, mentions various other things respecting the gods of Egypt, and the rituals of their worship. It appears, then, that, at whatever period idolatry commenced, or in whatever way its progress was begun or continued, it is in Egypt that we first recognize those forms, and that list of deities, which afterwards chiefly obtained, with some alteration of names,

* *Præp. Evang.* cap. 6. and 9. † *De fals. Rel.* lib. 2. ‡ *Collat.* 8. cap. 21.

&c. in various parts of the world. Egypt and Phœnicia were peopled by the posterity of Ham, the accursed son of Noah; and several authors, among whom are Lactantius, and some Jewish Rabbis, ascribe the origin of idolatry to Canaan and Mizraim, sons of Ham, who settled, the one in Phœnicia, and the other in Egypt. From Phœnicia it was propagated to the East, into the places inhabited by the posterity of Shem, *i. e.* into Chaldea, Mesopotamia, &c.; and to the west, *i. e.* into Asia Minor, Greece, and the isles where the posterity of Japhet resided. The Greeks indeed tell us, that idolatry took its rise either in the island of Crete, under the reign of Melissus, or at Athens, under Cecrops, or in Phrygia. This, however, is a mere national boast, without the smallest foundation; since every one acquainted with their history knows that they had their religion and ceremonies from Egypt and Phœnicia, with the colonies which came to them from those ancient nations. In this all the learned are agreed; Herodotus expressly declares it, and their own learned men, by travelling to Egypt and the East, for further instruction in the mysteries of religion, prove that they considered Egypt, &c. as the source of the system professed in Greece. It is evident, even from the imperfect accounts which still remain, that idolatry gradually increased from better to worse; that in its beginning it was neither so gross, nor

so encumbered with ceremonies, as it was afterwards. The oriental nations had, generally speaking, hardly any other gods but the sun, moon, and stars; and idolatry certainly commenced with the worship of those luminaries, particularly the sun and moon. Mankind, in their first deviations from truth, mingled their spiritual conceptions with their corporeal sensations, and, deriving much benefit from the influence of the sun and moon, they forgot that they were inanimate ministers of the divine will, and, dazzled with their splendour, and, perhaps, grateful for their useful influence, they conceived them to be gods, and they were consequently adored in almost every nation, under different names. The sun was the Osiris of Egypt, the Hammon of Lybia, the Saturn of Carthage *, the Adonis of Phœnicia, the Baal or Belus of Assyria, the Moloch of the Ammonites, the Dionysius or the Urotal of Arabia, the Mithras of Persia, and the Belenus of Gaul; and Macrobius † has demonstrated, that, among the Greeks, Apollo, Bacchus, Liber or Dionysius, were the same as the sun. In short, this luminary was the divinity of almost every nation, both in the old world and in the new. The moon, in like manner, was the Isis of Egypt, the Astarte of Phœnicia, the Alilat of Arabia, the Mylitta of Persia, the Artemis,

* *Servius in* 2. Æn. † *Sat.* Lib. 2. cap. 10.

Diana, Dictynna, &c. of Greece, of the island of Crete, of Delos, and other places. Macrobius indeed contends, and it has often been proved, with as much clearness and certainty as a thing of this nature and of such antiquity, can be proved, by numerous authors of the first celebrity, that all the Gods whom Pagans adored, owed their origin to the sun, moon, and stars. They are striking objects, and attract universal attention: but their distance, which prevents a particular investigation of their nature, affords room for an endless variety of conjectures. Their influence is extensive and useful, and their splendid utility seems, at first, to have excited, in the minds of men, ignorant of their nature, a superstitious kind of gratitude, which, through the prevalence of thoughtlessness and sensual pursuits, uniformly calculated to obscure our conceptions of spirit, and to undermine our sublimest ideas of Deity, would gradually degenerate into a regular system of idolatrous worship. Objects of sense naturally produce a more lively impression, and attract a more general notice than those of reflection. The uses, general properties, and particular effects, of the former, are obvious; those of the latter require a greater stretch of thought, are more easily overlooked, and sooner forgotten. Thus, by careless, dissipated, and consequently ignorant men, the worship due to an invisible, omniscient and

omnipotent Being, the Creator of all things, and the source of all enjoyment, would, in the gradual progress of sensuality, naturally be transferred to those corporeal existences, or visible beings, by the mediation of which mankind conceived their situation to be affected or improved; and thus the worship, which, in the first stage of their progress, they bestowed on the heavenly bodies, came at length to be extended to the elements, and to the souls of departed heroes. In different countries, the objects and the ritual of idolatrous worship have been variously modified; but, in all countries, and in every age, traces are to be found, which direct us, some more, some less evidently, to a similar origin. The causes of false religion, however they might differ in degree, were generally in every case the same in kind, and the effects must of consequence bear some resemblance. The effects of false religion, and of religion perverted, proceeding originally from human corruption, have been uniformly destructive of human happiness. This corruption certainly exists, for we feel its effects. It has produced error, and the errors it has produced have extended the evil effects of that corruption which occasioned them; and, operating upon one another, and on all the variety of human passions, they have contributed to interrupt and to pervert the operation of those principles which were intended and

calculated to produce virtue, and to ensure happiness.

" From ignorance of these circumstances, or from a wilful neglect or perversion of what cannot be denied, Dr F. occasions himself and his readers much unnecessary trouble. He declaims most violently against evils which no Christian defends, and which every true Christian deplores; but, unlike a philosopher, he avoids investigating the cause, or he assigns causes evidently inadequate, and he does not even hint at a remedy. The objects of his particular indignation are Judaism and Christianity; and, where he cannot directly oppose argument, or confute evidence, he endeavours to overthrow or undermine them, by bold assertions, or odious comparisons. The progress of error, or the general advantages resulting from the two revelations in question, he never considers; but, dwelling with malignant satisfaction on the particular errors and prejudices of the ignorant or vicious votaries of all systems, he roundly asserts, that, on comparison, the effects of Judaism and Christianity will be found to be the most atrocious. " I hope, (says he to Bishop Watson) you allow that the Spartans, the Athenians, the Romans, the Chinese, did not commit half the atrocities which disgrace Jewish history, the æra of the crusades, and the Christian persecutions, of the invasion of America, the massacres of here-

tics, &c. The candid observer must therefore conclude, that right and wrong is not confined to sects; that the Christian religion, whatever its precepts may be, has not been able to prevent crimes, while nations, who knew not so much as the name of Moses or Christ, produced a Confucius, an Aristides, a Socrates, an Epaminondas, a Cincinnatus. Among those nations who knew not the Lord Jehovah, we find Archimedes, Epicurus, (our author, without injuring his cause, or lessening the force of his argument, might have left this name out of his list,) Demosthenes, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero; while the chosen people of God, and their successors the Christians, borrowed their language, the very names of their gods, and the little science they knew, from these despised infidels." The meaning of the learned physician, in this passage, I confess I am at a loss to discover. His intention is indeed obvious, but his mode of expressing it is abundantly confused. His mode of comparison, however, is clearly most uncandid. He selects the fairest view, and, except Epicurus, some of the brightest ornaments of Paganism; and he opposes to them, not a parallel view and similar ornaments of Judaism and Christianity, but avowedly the most odious parts of the history of both. The first part of this quotation we shall have occasion to consider presently, when we come to enumerate some of the more

prominent features of Paganism, and to compare its general effects with those of Judaism, and particularly of Christianity. The latter part is the most confused and jumbled composition I almost ever read. He supposes it possible, that the precepts of Christianity may be excellent, and yet he opposes that religion, because it has not been able to prevent crimes; a circumstance which most evidently cannot be the necessary consequence of any system of precepts, however excellent, or even perfect, while men are left a freedom of action; and exposed, on the one hand, to evil temptations, while, on the other, they are furnished with motives of resistance, and a system of virtuous conduct. The question is not, Whether our religion has uniformly prevented crimes? for where there is freedom of action and temptation to evil, there always will be error; but it is this, Whether, considering the constitution of human nature, composed, if we may so speak, of virtuous stamina, opposed by vicious propensities, and liable to have either virtue or vice confirmed by habit, it does, or does not afford sufficient motives, and sufficient directions, to those who will seriously attend to them,—first, to avoid the evils to which we are naturally exposed,—and then to attain to that virtue which it recommends, and which it promises to reward? The evils can be avoided, the duties may be per-

formed, for they have been so in innumerable instances. And where the evils have been cautiously avoided, and the duties faithfully performed, the effect has uniformly been,—virtue, the most unsullied and sublime; firmness, which the severest misfortunes could not shake; and happiness, which nothing earthly gives, or can destroy. Such are the particular effects which necessarily result from Christian obedience. That these effects are not general, is to be lamented; but they are not general, only because Christian obedience is not so. But we shall soon see, that even the general effects of Christianity, negligent and wicked as men have ever been since it was published, have been favourable to virtue, happiness, and every species of moral improvement. Where these effects have been more than ordinarily prevented, we shall probably find the cause, by attentively considering the circumstances of the period in which this extraordinary prevention happened. But the Doctor, with a love of confusion peculiar to himself, in the list of Pagan worthies he has exhibited to us, and which he considers as unparalleled in Jewish or Christian history, combines warriors and legislators, philosophers and orators, and, amongst the rest, a professed debauchee and atheist; and he boasts how much both the Jews and Christians are obliged to them, both for their language, the very names of

their gods, and the little science they knew. It is surely very unworthy of an honest or candid man, and the Doctor pretends to be both, thus obstinately to confound matters so distinct, and to perplex what he seems unable fairly to resist. Religion, language, and science, are very distinct things: To be eminent in the duties of religion, does not necessarily suppose either a profound critical knowledge in language, or extensive research in science; and experience has sometimes afforded us instances of excellent linguists and philosophers, who deserved little praise for their religion or morality; and it may possibly at length be found, when opposition will be vain and impossible, that the boasted wisdom of the wise was foolishness; that, whilst it promised much, it was unable to perform any thing; and that that form of doctrine, which the votaries of worldly wisdom have accounted foolishness, could only lead to true wisdom; that, though a stumbling-block to the Jews and to the Greeks, foolishness, it is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe, who,—regardless of vain philosophy, and oppositions of science, falsely so called; on their guard against sophistry, on the one hand, and vice on the other,—have humility to learn, and courage to persevere in their duty.

" Language is the faculty or art of communicating our thoughts to one another, so

as to be understood. The *jus et norma loquendi* are use; that is the best language which is best understood; and that will generally be the most improved, which has been the longest used by enlightened men. That, in this respect, as in many or most others, we should be indebted to those who have gone before us, cannot well be wondered at, or justly adduced as a sign of our inferiority. Science is the result of the exertion of the human intellect on itself and on external objects, in arranging, comparing, combining, and separating them. That some such exertions should have taken place in ancient times, was to be expected; and that posterity should take advantage of the labours of their predecessors, is natural and proper. That we lie under considerable obligations to the Greeks and Romans in the articles of language, science, and belles lettres, every man of knowledge amongst us is willing to acknowledge with gratitude. The page of modern learning is rendered peculiarly ample and valuable, by being enriched with the spoils of time. Our literary obligations to the illustrious Pagans whom the Doctor mentions, and to whom I suppose he alludes, we neither forget nor disregard. But how he should have taken it into his head, that the Jews were under similar obligations, it is difficult to conceive. They were a distinguished people; their manners, their religion, their language, and

their science, were formed long before the earliest of the persons he mentions existed, before the Greek or Roman name was known. Confucius, the most ancient of the persons he brings forward, died about 479 years before Christ; and the Israelites had left Egypt, as we have already seen, 1491 years before that æra. But to instance the Chinese at all, seems, I think, to be a gross oversight in our learned author; for, as far as I know, neither Jew nor Christian of any age, owe one particle of gratitude to that secluded nation, either with respect to language, science, or religion. But it is difficult to conceive for what purpose any man, in a debate upon the truth of a certain system of religion, should think of introducing remarks so foreign to the subject, and in themselves so frivolous and unmeaning. Language and science are human attributes, and claim only human authority. The religion in question claims to be divine; and, in our investigation of the claim, is therefore not to be confounded with any human invention. But the Doctor gravely adds, that, besides language and science, the Jews and Christians borrowed the very names of their gods from the despised infidels whom he enumerates and alludes to. This assertion is so truly inexplicable, that I know not what to make of it. If the sagacious author means, that when we Christians treat or speak of the religion of those Pagans, we call their gods

by the names which they themselves gave them, it is true; but the remark will then dwindle, not only into frivolity, but into the grossest absurdity. If he means, that we have borrowed a multiplicity of gods, together with their names, from those nations, he must have been dreaming when he wrote it. Neither Jews nor Christians have ever acknowledged any but one God; and no Pagan deity's name, as far as I know, has ever, either by Jew or Christian, been used to denote the God whom they worship. 'Tis true, indeed, the word God is rendered in Greek Θεος, and in Latin *Deus*, words which the Greeks and Romans applied *generally* also to their deities. But, can any human being, in his senses, object to Christianity, or to Christians, because some of the words, by which they denominate the object of their worship, can be translated into, or may have been derived from, the Pagan languages. I say *some* of the words, because our most significant and dignified appellations of Deity, such as *Jehovah*, &c. come from the Jews, who, to whatever follies some vicious characters among them may have been seduced, certainly derived neither the knowledge nor the names of their God from any Pagan source; and, least of all, could they be under such obligations to the Greeks, the Romans, and the Chinese, since their religion and their language, and the names by which they ad-

dressed the Deity, were completely formed and established, as every scholar must know, long before those nations were known to the world. Nor is there the smallest particle of reason or argument, or evidence, for supposing that they borrowed their worship, &c. from any other Pagan nation whatever, since there is not the smallest trace of any thing similar to the spirit of their religion to be met with in the history of any people who ever existed; and therefore not the smallest reason for doubting, at least, the originality of their system.

" The Doctor, after these sagacious hints and learned assertions, proceeds thus : " It was not the oracle of Delphos, the augurs, or the sybils, that enlightened the Greeks and Romans. The rabble credited them, as the ignorant Jews and Christians did their prophets and apostles. In short, morals cannot be invented; there cannot be two systems of morality. The precepts must be directed to principles existing in the heart of man. Ignorance conceals from man the rule of conduct, in the same manner that it prevents them from knowing geometry; the moment they study either, they are put in the road of truth." This paragraph exhibits as incoherent a rhapsody as can well be conceived, and proceeds upon an error in which the Doctor seems determined to persevere. He obstinately confounds religious knowledge with scien-

tific improvement; and he absurdly argues, that, because science was known to, and improved by Pagans, therefore Christianity is false; and he modestly insinuates, that the ignorant only believe it to be true. It is surely sufficient confutation to state such disingenuous and prevaricating falsehood. No man in his senses can allow himself to be misled by it. It is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive the physician's meaning, when, from the oracles, augurs, and sybils, &c. he steps plump, and without warning, into the region of metaphysics. If the principles of morality exist, as he asserts, but without attempting proof, in the heart of man certain and definite; and if the moment we study them, we are put in the road to truth, it is most remarkable that mankind should have differed so widely respecting this road; and that, in the revolution of so many ages, though many have studied, so few, according to the Doctor, have found it. There must certainly be some cause for the ignorance which he asserts conceals from men the rule of conduct, different from that which prevents them from the knowledge of geometry. All men, capable of investigation (and every one, not neglected in his youth, or deficient in mental faculties, may be so) and all who have applied to the subject, have arrived at certainty in that and many other natural sciences. Their principles are not only definite, but they are

completely exterior to man, and excite neither passion nor prejudice. Their evidence is completely estimated, and, as the effect excites no partiality or opposition, its force is fully felt. This circumstance I remarked at our last meeting; and I added, that morality and religion have to struggle against all those prejudices, partialities, and obstacles, which arise from private passion, public opinion, or vicious indulgences. It is here that we are to look for the source of our ignorance, and our crimes; and the experience of mankind, in every age, completely proves that human efforts cannot stem the torrent, and it is therefore cruel to deprive us of those comforts, and that assistance, by which alone we can oppose it. Mankind are bad, too, too bad, as it is.—Deprive them of religious restraint, and spiritual comfort, and they will become totally insupportable.

" Mr Macleod's second letter appears to me to be a master-piece of confusion and absurdity. He rambles from one thing to another, with a rapidity which it is scarce possible to follow. He is now busy calumniating revelation, and, while we are expecting him to proceed to argument, we find him in an instant abusing Bishop Horseley and the clergy, and endeavouring to undermine the security, by destroying the influence, of civil government. But, passing by these angry sallies as unworthy of all no-

tice, because totally unconnected with the subject, we find him allowing that Thomas Paine's book " could not fail to warp the debauched to absolute profligacy, because men, already unsettled in their creed, readily embrace the religion least irksome to them. This is that which scorns to humble its votaries at any altar, and knows no divine monitor but nature. Undoubtedly such religion pleases the idle, suits the vagrant, is charming in the eyes of robbers, and has a positive tendency to subvert truth. But (he proceeds) although Paine's book be much interlarded with scurrility, and sometimes tinged by obsceneness, the main scope of the author is apparently what I have already stated—to inculcate the practice of every virtuous duty upon his readers." What, I pray you, is to be expected of a man capable of writing such inconsistent nonsense? All the evil tendencies of Paine's book, and all its author's absurdities and crimes, are, in the opinion of Mr M., amply atoned for, because " he boldly attacks the whole body of revealed religion ;" because he has thought proper to assert, that " the removal of error, and destruction of tyranny, are his favourite pursuits." Of Christian writers, our author judges in a very different manner. Mr P. he says, " has merely proclaimed the war of intellect against error," while he who has endeavoured to defend established order against levelling anarchy, and the truths of

the gospel against infidel reproach, he asserts, " has waged the war of proud superstition against humble truth." After several sentences, replete with insulting language, he asserts, but the assertion is followed by no proof, and supported by no fact; that the " disputes about the Godhead of Jesus Christ, (in which Bishop Horseley bore so honourable and distinguished a part,) were introductory to a difference of opinion, and gave rise to doubts concerning the authenticity of the New Testament:" and he asserts, that the perusal of what he calls the *anathemas*, and conflicts of that period, produced the infidelity of Thomas Paine, and others who have lately followed him in the same career. Mr M., however, will please to recollect, that such improbable assertions are beside the avowed purpose of his book; that, though they were founded in fact, they would produce on his side of the debate no favourable conclusion; that it is probable, however, that they are not founded in fact, since there have been infidels in every age, and of course long before the period to which he points, whose names are now scarce known to the followers of their errors; and, finally, that it is more than likely, judging, as we have a right to do, from universal experience, that the same fate awaits, and will quickly overtake, him and his associates, the infidels of our day. But he adds, with great gravity, that " the

speculations which led to this infidelity were not uninteresting. For, doubtless, the whole of Christ's precepts, nay, his laws, can be traced to sources, and rest on authorities, entirely mortal." Here, again, is mere assertion, and that, too, respecting the very basis of the debate :—But, let us not misrepresent him, he does attempt to prove it. He says, that those who were most zealous in the propagation of this religion, "like Jesus, generally experienced contumely, and, in particular instances, death. Confucius (however he adds,) gave the *same*, with *many more wise laws*, (it would have been condescending if he had mentioned some of these) to the Chinese people, as Jesus Christ administered to the Jews." But he was also persecuted and insulted ;— and so he speaks of Solon and of Socrates, who, though persecuted, &c. while they lived, were honoured by their countrymen after their death, as well as the founder of Christianity. "We know (continues he,) that those ancients were not less wise, and certainly more learned, than Jesus Christ. They, too, had associates, pupils, followers, and disciples, who were emulous to equal them in wisdom, in virtue, in austerity, and in *continence*. But so were not the subsequent followers of these followers, and so are not the Christians of our day." Wherefore, he concludes, what no one will deny, that vice existed long before T. P. contri-

buted what our author calls *a priest's-mite* to the public insecurity, &c. But, surely, a wise or a good man will not contend, that, because much evil already naturally exists in the world, therefore we may properly add to its sum. In the subsequent part of this letter, Mr M. grants, what cannot indeed be denied, that " the maxims of the Christian Religion are fundamentally good;" and, in one or two paragraphs, he writes in a stile which, as from him it is inconsistent, is also surprising, but to which few Christians will materially object, and he finishes thus : " It is the abuse of Christianity, joined to the avarice of power, which causes that immorality, and produces those crimes, so certainly inimical to the peace of nations and the laws of God." These assertions, and a few others of a similar cast, when compared with the general reasoning and abusive language of the bulk of Mr M's. work, afford a striking example of inconsistency, of perversion of mind, or of downright ignorance, perhaps, indeed, of the three combined. The concession here implied, or rather directly made,—and it is no more than the bitterest enemy of Christianity, if he adhere in the smallest degree to truth, must grant,—renders nugatory and absurd most of the reasoning, such as it is, and all the abuse which he has thought proper to vent against this religion and its professors. The maxims of the Christian religion

being fundamentally good, and its laws being conducive to virtue, not only in word and deed, but in thought, the spring of action, the crimes of its professors can afford no just argument against it, though they exhibit a most lamentable proof of the corruption of human nature, which thus neglects or abuses the most perfect of institutions. I do not hesitate, notwithstanding all I have yet seen against it, to represent Christianity as the most perfect institution with which man has yet become acquainted; as superior in its nature and effects to every system of duty or rule of action, whether religious or scientific, which was ever taught, or which it is possible for mankind to discover or combine. Dr F. and Mr M., on the contrary, dwelling, apparently with much satisfaction, on the misconduct of many of its professors, and on its consequent inefficacy in numerous instances where its authority has been acknowledged, and where, therefore, its duties ought to have been obeyed, keep aloof from the investigation of its proof, of its intrinsic value, and general effects. They, therefore, with very little ceremony, rank it with the numerous superstitions which, in every age, have disgraced mankind; and they seem even to consider it as inferior, in truth and efficacy, to those philosophical systems which were taught in the schools of antiquity. On some minds, present evils have such an effect as to obscure

the good which accompanies them, and the passion for change, and ideal perfection, is often so strong, as to induce men to hazard it, before they have once reflected on the consequences, or have coolly considered the nature and advantages of what they enjoy. The evils of former times, as they have never experienced them, have on their minds a less poignant effect; and, what they do not themselves feel, they are apt to conclude (especially if the conclusion will suit a favourite hypothesis) was never felt, and never existed. The operation of gratitude for present blessings, is generally too slight to resist the impulses of ambition, or to curb the luxuriance of a heated imagination. Improvement in virtue and happiness, is the avowed object of every political and religious schemer: Like the dog in the fable, however, we often find, that they hazard the substance for a shadow; a shadow which, in such circumstances, is generally attended with most serious evils. Thus vice and misery are often, we may say always, the only result of political turbulence and religious scepticism. Virtue and happiness shun their proud contaminated grasp, and retire to the peaceful shade of religious humility.

"Our two authors assert that Christianity is of human invention and authority, and that its influence on human life and manners has been hurtful. They support this position by a general appeal to the religious

systems of antiquity, &c. and by an unrestrained abuse of the characters of Christians. We shall endeavour to meet the objection in its full force, by taking a more particular view than they have thought proper, of the principles and conduct of Pagan nations, in various parts of the world; and we shall then probably be able to judge whether mankind has gained or lost by the introduction and dissemination of Christianity. The performance of religious duties is natural to the human race. To supplicate Heaven in affliction; to express gratitude in prosperity; and to look forward with fear or hope to eternity,—are duties so natural as to be found among every people, savage and civilized. So natural and so necessary, in the conduct of human affairs, are these sentiments of religion, that we find, in every state where they are gradually undermined, or publicly neglected, the fabric of government and individual happiness moulders away with equal rapidity, or falls at once into a dreadful ruin. Even the false systems of religion, though they have naturally and essentially produced many crimes, have in this view been of most essential service to mankind, and have preserved them from the most wretched state of human nature, total irreligion and anarchy, which know no law, and will submit to no authority, human or divine. The false religions, however, carry along with

them their own antidote. Though calculated, when opposed to total irreligion and downright atheism, to produce comparative advantage in the world at large; they are not therefore calculated to produce exalted virtue among individuals. On the contrary, they not only allow, but sanction some of the most degrading crimes; aad in this, as well as in other respects, consists the striking difference between them and Christianity. The crimes of Christians are the effect of human depravity, the worst effects of which their religion has most essentially contributed to lessen; but those of Pagans were generally the effect of the system they professed; the supposed sanction of the Gods concealing from the unhappy votary the guilty nature of his conduct.

"The account of the origin of the world, the nature of the Gods, and the duties of religion, in all those nations on whom the light of revelation has not risen, is dark, contradictory, and absurd. The Theogonies of Chaldea and Phœnicia, as preserved from their own historians by Josephus, Eusebius, and Syncellus, are replete with the grossest absurdities, exhibit lamentable proofs of the progress of error, and afford a mighty contrast to the mild and consistent account which, in the Bible, we enjoy of revealed truth. Wild, however, as the notions of the Chaldeans appear to have been, from the account of one of their own his-

torians, Berosus, whose treatise on their Theogony is preserved by Syncellus; and of the Phœnicians, from whose historian, Sanchoniatho, copious extracts are found in Eusebius,—they, on various occasions, so directly refer to the grand truths recorded by Moses, as cannot leave a doubt, on any reasonable mind, that they gradually degenerated from those original truths to the wild obscurity in which they have been thus veiled. The principles of the Egyptians were similar to those of the Phœnicians; and from Chaldea, Egypt, and Phœnicia, most other Pagan nations, with whose religious sentiments or practices we have become acquainted, derived their systems. Referring such of you, gentlemen, as may wish for complete information on these subjects, to the various writers on Mythology, and particularly to the *Abbe Banier's Mythology and Fables of the Ancients, explained from history; to Bryant's enquiries on the same subject; and to Maurice's Indian antiquities, and History of Indostan*, &c. I shall be as brief as possible, in what I have to adduce respecting the religion of Pagans. The origin of Paganism, I think, I have already pointed out; and I have now only to consider its more prominent features and general effects, among various tribes of men among whom it was and is established.

" The Egyptians, we know, were in very early times a most enlightened people; but

as their religious principles were absurd and impious, their general conduct was also corrupt and abandoned. Besides the heavenly bodies, they worshipped brute beasts, and even the vilest reptiles, and they allowed of incest, a crime which we abhor more than murder, by law. Of their merciless cruelty we have a very memorable instance in the Israelites, who originally came to live among them by royal licence, but of whom, notwithstanding their obligations to an illustrious patriarch of that people, they afterwards became so jealous, that, by a public decree, all their male children were destroyed, to prevent their increase. The Persians worshipped the sun and moon, offered sacrifices to fire, permitted polygamy, sons to marry their mothers, and fathers their daughters, and in their punishments they were severe even to barbarity. The Salii and Corybantes, priests of Mars and Cybele, performed the ceremonies of those deities with frantic dances, and outrageous fits of madness. The rites of Bacchus were obscene, ridiculous, and extravagant, in the highest degree; and those of Baal were shocking and unnatural. The most solemn act of worship performed to the Syrian Baal, was to break wind, and to ease themselves at the foot of his image. The rites of Venus in Cyprus, and at Aphac, in mount Libanus, consisted in the grossest lewdness. The Babylonian women were obliged to prosti-

tute themselves, once in their lives, at the temple of Venus or Mylitte, to the first man that asked them ; and the money earned by this wretched act of devotion was reckoned sacred. Nor were the nocturnal ceremonies at Rome much more delicate.

" But besides these shocking instances of Heathen depravity, murder, of the most horrid sort, was often an act of devotion in almost every Pagan nation in the world. Parents burnt alive their own children to Baal, Moloch, and many other deities. In Britain and Gaul, it was a common practice to surround a man with a kind of wicker work, and thus to burn him alive in honour of their gods. The Scythians sacrificed to Mars one from among every hundred prisoners they took in war. The Peruvians, in their sacrifices, had a custom of tying a man alive to a stake, and pulling the flesh off his bones by small pieces, which they broiled and eat in his sight, thinking they thus did him the greatest honour. The Carthaginians, a polished and commercial people, in times of public calamity not only burnt alive the children of their best families to Saturn, and that by hundreds, but they frequently sacrificed themselves in great numbers in the same manner. In Eastern nations, the favourite wife burnt herself on the same funeral pile with the body of her deceased husband,—a custom which still exists in some barbarous states. Oracles,

astrology, soothsaying, superstition, magic, &c. overran the whole heathen world, and presided over the councils of the wisest states. The heathen gods were uniformly represented, even by their own worshipers, as envious of human happiness, as subject to the same passions, to the same infirmities and crimes, which were thus sanctioned in their followers by their supposed example. In the catalogue of their gods, are found the most barbarous oppressors, the vilest impostors, the lewdest prostitutes, the most infamous adulterers, murderers and parricides, which ever disgraced or afflicted mankind; and the rites of their worship, and the morals of their votaries, were exactly what such examples gave reason to hope for. A good religion may not always be successful in restraining the passions of men; because, when evil passions interfere with its duties, those duties will often be disregarded; but a bad one, such as every pagan system has uniformly been, cannot of itself produce virtue; because the generality of those systems, I may say the whole, have not only not prohibited, but have often sanctioned the most degrading consequences of human infirmity. Men may be, and often have been, the better of good principles of religion; but they will very seldom, perhaps never, be better than the religion they profess. It is not to be supposed that they will affect to be superior to the gods whom they worship; and, as human nature, in such circumstances,

rather degenerates than improves, they will generally be worse. The Pagans, accordingly, did not only indulge their lusts and appetites out of principle, but they fell into general habits of the most abandoned nature; because there were no principles in their religious systems to restrain them. Fornication was never considered as a crime, and even sodomy was committed with little shame and no remorse. They often exposed such of their children as they did not like, to be devoured by wild beasts; a barbarity still exercised by the Hottentots, and some other African nations. Several races of people, inhabiting the banks of the Danube, used to throw their new-born infants into the stream, and such only as swam were preserved. The Caribes often castrated their children, that they might become fatter and more delicate food; and the politest nations of antiquity were entertained at their spectacles with men killing men, and with others engaged in dreadful combat with lions and tygers. Many of them eat human flesh; a barbarous custom which exists in several Pagan nations to this very day; and others, out of pretended tenderness, and to relieve them from the miseries of old age, killed their parents, and feasted on their flesh. That this custom still exists, Mr Goodwill has already informed you; and, as he seemed to consider it as an instance of freedom from the prejudices which

" When we direct our attention to the Pagans of modern times,—to the Americans, Africans, Tartars, Chinese, and the East in general,—we find the greater part of them not only capable of the most enormous crimes, (for monsters of iniquity we find in all nations and periods) but we find them performing them by a kind of system, with impunity, and without remorse. And yet, if any such superiority really exists, the inbred superiority of reason should, long ere this time of day, have led some, at least, if not all of those wretched savages, as the great proportion of them are, to something higher than the worshiph of stocks, stones and devils, and the wretched principles and practice which we know obtains among them. In Hindostan, and other parts of the East, the bramins and learned men profess principles of a very sublime morality, and elevated speculation; but the principles of the people at large are wretched and grovelling: Scandalous, however as they are, they are sanctioned, in direct contradiction to their principles, by the conduct and practice of the most enlightened! Nor, in similar circumstances, can it ever be otherwise. Speculation, however elevated and beautiful, is unfit to direct the conduct, or correct the morals, of the most learned; because it possesses no sanctions of sufficient authority to resist the violent impulses of passion or bad example. Over the ignorant it can

have no power at all; because they have neither leisure nor abilities to attend to or comprehend it. Thus, in Greece and Rome, many of the philosophers had very tolerable notions both of God and virtue, and on both subjects have written with much elegance. But their notions, the result of philosophic instruction, or solitary speculation, were of no service to the bulk of their countrymen, who would neither attend to, nor could they understand them. Even the philosophers themselves, though pleased with the beauty of their own conceptions, were often involved in serious doubts respecting their truth; and whilst, in their writings and to their scholars, they largely declaimed on the nature of God, and the practice of virtue,—by their countenance and their practice, they encouraged the superstition and the vices of their countrymen. But not only was their practice in many respects improper, and their influence with their countrymen, where it happened to be correct, inconsiderable,—but their very speculations were often most erroneous, and led to consequences equally remote from truth and virtue. The Peripatetics thought the world was eternal; and the Epicureans, that it was made by chance; whilst many others considered it as pervaded and animated by a vital and intelligent substance, and regarded it as a divinity which contained, framed, and governed all things, as is evident both

from their * poets, † orators, ‡ historians, and § philosophers. The Stoics, indeed, considered it as the chief god. The sentient nature of the sun, moon, and stars, was ever in a particular manner asserted by the most eminent philosophers, especially by Pythagoras and his followers, and by the Stoics. Even they, who believed that the world had a beginning, and was a mere mass of created matter, had not the most distant notion of its real origin, either as to time or manner; and this ignorance occasioned an inundation of fanciful and imaginary opinions, respecting what they had *no* certain information. The corruption and irregularity in human nature, equally puzzled and perplexed them, and tempted them to conclude, either that the nature of God is not pure; that there are too opposite principles in the world, the one good and the other evil; or that the soul of man is not of divine origin. The mode of effecting a reconciliation between God and man, they could not and did not know any thing about. They might hope for mercy, but they could not be assured of acceptance.

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* See *Virgil. Georg.* lib. 4. v. 221. and *Æneid* lib. 6. v. 724.

† See Cic. Acad. I. lib. 2. c. 37. and de Nat. Deorum. lib. 2. c. 14. and 34.

‡ See Plut. de Placit. Philos. lib. 1. c. 7. and lib. 2. c. 3. § Plat. Tim. Diog. Laert. lib. 7. and Seneca Ep. 94. &c.

This was the work of revelation alone. The nature of public worship, and public instruction, for the poor and unlearned especially, was in those periods equally dark and indeterminate. They saw the reasonableness of the thing, but were completely at a loss to fix on the mode, and to give authority to their institutions. Ignorance of those important matters, with which we are happily acquainted, produced among the most learned men of ancient times serious doubts, and, in the world at large, universal uncertainty, particularly respecting the nature and attributes of God, the origin of man, the purpose of his creation, and the nature of his relation to the Deity. Many of them, indeed, men of the greatest celebrity, acknowledged that all things were uncertain; that truth lay buried in a deep abyss; and that the utmost that human reason could do in her inquiries, amounted to nothing more than probability, and often mere conjecture. Accordingly, we find the wisest among them absolutely asserting the necessity of a divine revelation, in order to afford to mankind a full and certain knowledge of their duty *. Of the immortality of the soul, and of a future account, the grand and only effectual motives to virtue, they knew nothing certain. The Epicure-

* See Cicer. Nat. Deor. lib. 1. Acad. Quest. lib. 1. and Minac. Fel. p. 112. and Lact. lib. 3. c. 20.

ans entirely disbelieved the soul's immortality; and even the Stoics believed it survived the body but for a certain period; and the other sects, though inclined to believe it, entertained great doubts about it, and differed in this, as in other respects, most materially amongst one another. Socrates said, he had good hope of some sort of being after this life: but, in another place, he seems rather to have wished, than to have been certain of it:—the expectation gave him pleasure, but he doubted whether it was not an erroneous hope *: Cicero, speaking of the several opinions on this subject, adds, " Which of these is true, God only knows, and which is most probable, a very great question †." On which Seneca justly remarked, " That immortality, however desireable, was rather promised than proved by those great men ‡. Of course, they knew nothing of a resurrection, or a day of judgment; and they accordingly exploded the notion of infernal torments for the wicked, as mere fictions of the poets ||. The effect of this ignorance, and these uncertainties, on the conduct of the bulk of men, must be evident to all who have studied the history, or considered the

* See Plato in Phœd. et in Apol. Socratis.

† Tusc. Qust. lib. 1.

‡ Ep. 102.

|| See Plut. de Aud. Poet. Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. 1. et Senec. ad Marc. c. 19.

nature of the human race. Every thing was doubtful; there was little ground for hope, and equally little for fear. There were therefore no effectual motives for virtuous action, no authoritative institutions to enforce obedience. The philosophers had endles and irreconcileable differences on the most momentous points; and each sect overthrew all others, in order to establish itself, though in certainty or propriety it could afford nothing superior. Some were atheists, some deists, and others polytheists; some believed in futurity, others not; some believed virtue and vice to be naturally opposite and unchangeable; while others asserted, with some of our modern reformers, that the laws and customs of particular countries, alone, determined what was to be reckoned good or evil, just or unjust, right or wrong. The Stoics considered virtue as the sole good and its own reward; while the Aristotelians considered the good things of this life as necessary to happiness; and the Epicúreans asserted, that pleasure, or freedom from pain, was the final good. Some acknowledged a Providence, others denied it; some considered it as general, some as particular; some acknowledged the omniscience of God, and others did not; some believed in the punishment of crimes, and others asserted, that the Gods were neither pleased nor displeased on any account whatever.

made slaves. Suicide passed for heroism, both in Greece and Rome; has been particularly defended by many philosophers of note; and Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Zeno, Gleombrotus, and Menippus, put their principles in this, as in other respects, in practice. Zeno indeed asserted, that all crimes were equal, and that incest with one's mother was a thing perfectly indifferent.—Cleanthes and Chrysippus maintained the lawfulness of unnatural lust, and that sons and daughters might roast and eat the flesh of their parents, with the same innocence as any other food. Diogenes and the Cynics, on the contrary, allowed the same licence to parents with respect to their children; and taught, that the grossest acts of lewdness might be committed openly in the sight of the sun; while the Stoics asserted, that no language ought to be avoided, or censured as filthy or obscene. Epicurus defends incest both with mothers and daughters; and Aristippus, though a man of property, considering his children as the spittle or vermin of his body, refused to maintain them; and asserted, that a wise man might commit theft, sacrilege, or adultery, if he could do so with impunity. He accordingly kept a seraglio of women and boys, and actually foreswore a sum of money deposited in his hands. Crates and Hipparchia, a female philosopher, lay together publicly in the sight of multitudes.

Even Xenophon kept a boy called Clinias for purposes of lust, and practised the same horrid crime with others more advanced; and Herillus, in his youth, voluntarily submitted to be thus abused. Speusippus was caught and slain in the act of adultery. In short, we learn from Diogenes Laertius, Sextus Empiricus, Lucian and Plutarch, that the sages of antiquity, whatever were their speculations, were practically the corrupters of youth, adulterers, and tyrants; and the account which they give is confirmed by the works of the most remarkable of those sages themselves. Even Seneca the moralist is not to be exempted from this severe censure, as we understand from Dion Cassius. Nor are the illustrious characters of Lycurgus, Timoleon, Cicero, Cato of Utica, Brutus, and Germanicus, free from moral turpitude. The first, it is well known, encouraged theft by law; and the second murdered his own brother from principle. Cicero, though he writes respecting religion and virtue in a stile not easy to be surpassed, reduced not his reasoning on all occasions to practice. His vanity was his ruling passion, glory was his object; and he roundly asserts, that virtue has no other reward. He even defends war, though undertaken only for glory; and, though illustrious as a patriot, he at length deserted both his country and his friends, and became a servile flatterer of Cæsar. In one

of his letters he says, *I hate the very gods, who have hitherto been so profuse in their favours to me.* Brutus's heroism was summed up with acknowledging, that he had pursued virtue in vain, and found it but an empty name,—and with suicide. Even Cato turned a public robber and oppressor; and unable, with all his virtuous fortitude, to support the calamities of life, died also by his own hand. Germanicus, whose natural sweetness of temper was uncommonly great, in his last moments urged his friends to avenge his death on Piso and Plancina, who he believed had poisoned or bewitched him: He even directed the means of punishment, and received their oaths for performing this last request. Indeed, the forgiving of injuries, whether real or supposed, was no part of the system of ancient times. Socrates declared it neither unjust nor revengeful to rejoice in the misfortunes of our enemies. Cicero avowedly approved and professed revenge; and Aristotle considered meekness as a mental defect, because it leads to forgiveness, and denominated the patient enduring of reproach, the spirit of a slave. The thirty Athenian tyrants caused even daughters to dance in the blood of their murdered parents. Licinius Lucullus, contrary to express articles, murdered 20,000 of the Caucæi. Augustus, having taken Perusia, offered up 300 of the chief inhabitants at the altar of Julius Ce-

sar. Nero, after committing incest with his mother, murdered her in the most cruel manner; and after putting to death the best citizens of Rome, set fire to the city, and looked upon the mighty devastation with the utmost satisfaction. Galba, assembling, under a false pretence, the inhabitants of three Spanish towns, massacred 7,000 of them. Caracalla murdered his brother Geta in his mother's arms; and, having afterwards married her, because some inhabitants of Alexandria called him Oedipus, and her Jocasta, he marched an army into that city, massacred the inhabitants, and reduced it to a desart. Tiberius, Caligula, Domitian, Commodus and Heliogabulus, were monsters almost beyond example. The ten persecutions of the Christians, by which several millions of innocent and inoffensive persons were destroyed by the most dreadful tortures, affords a monument of the merciless cruelty of the Pagan Emperors of Rome, so truly shocking, that human nature revolts at the detail, and at being obliged to acknowledge the authors of those cruelties as men. On the whole, I think we may justly assert, that he who will compare the principles and conduct of Pagans with those of Christians, and who will, after such comparison, either prefer or equal the former to the latter, must equally betray his malice and his ignorance. To say the least, the principles of the most enlightened Heath-

ens were extremely equivocal, while their practice, in numerous instances, completely opposed much of what they taught. * However much delighted they might be with their own speculations, they do not themselves pretend that they produced a suitable practice, either in the teacher or his scholars. Aristotle, in the third chapter of his second book of Ethics, represents the scholars of philosophers, as " learning to wrangle, rather than to live, and as being no more bettered by the moral lessons of their masters, than sick men would be by the discourses of their physician, without taking his prescriptions." Cicero also, in the second book of his Tusculan questions, says : " Scarce any of the philosophers are formed, in mind and manners, according to the dictates of reason ; scarce any who do not make their institutions rather an ostentation of knowledge, than a rule of life; scarce any, who obey themselves, and are governed, by, their own precepts :" and Quinctilian, speaking of the philosophers of

* It will be particularly difficult to find, either among the chief philosophers, or among their associates, pupils, followers and disciples, that austerity and *continence*, which Mr M. asserts distinguished them. He says, (see above p. 179.) of those associates, &c. that they were emulous to equal their masters in wisdom, virtue and continence, which, from the above detail of circumstances, it will be readily granted they might easily accomplish.

his time, says: "That the most notorious vices were screened under that name; and that they did not maintain the character by virtue and study, but concealed very vicious lives under an austere look, and a habit different from the rest of mankind." The inbred superiority of reason, then, however well calculated it may be to amuse, is by no means fitted to direct the conduct of men in the paths of virtue. Cicero, speaking of this guide, so much extolled by modern infidels, and considering it, as it always ought to be considered, as opposed by corrupt lives and perverse opinions, asserts, that the true light of nature is no where to be found; and he adds, that "there are in our minds the seeds of virtue, by which nature would conduct us to happiness, if they were allowed to grow up. But now, no sooner are we born, but we fall into a wretched depravity and corruption of manners and opinions." Of this corruption, however, the existence of which they saw, and the effects of which they sometimes lament, they knew not the cause; and they could find no cure for it, nor could they oppose any effectual resistance to it. Besides, had their principles been ever so pure and effectual, they had not the means of disseminating them among the bulk of the people. Their pupils were from among the learned, the rich, the noble, and the illustrious. If the poor had been able to comprehend them, they had no way of

becoming acquainted with them. The philosophers were few in number, and their disciples were of course confined. Yet it must be granted, by all who believe in a God, and consequently in the necessity of some religion, that the soul of a peasant is as valuable in his sight as that of a prince; the salvation of an ignorant mechanic, as that of an enlightened philosopher; and yet of these, the sages of antiquity took no charge; nor has any system of religion, the Jewish and Christian alone excepted, appeared in the world level to their capacities, or adapted to their necessities.

"Of Confucius and his principles, so highly celebrated by our two learned authors, I know but little; nor can I discover among his laws any which, in a religious view, deserve to be preferred, or even to be compared, to those of Christianity. A noble author, (Baron Haller) whose testimony is at least of equal credit with that of Dr F. and Mr M., says of him, that 'he wanted a greater degree of fervency; his doctrine was capable of rendering the people obedient to the laws of Emperors, but not to those of God; it might make them citizens, but not truly pious; it might give to its disciples the appearance of virtue or wisdom, but could not render them really good.' Of the immortality of the soul, this celebrated wise man had no idea; and his philosophy, instead of morality, teaches us only political duty, or a morality merely subservient to

the ends of government. He speaks of God as a pure and perfect principle, and is said to have prohibited idolatry. But if he did so, the prohibition is certainly disregarded; for temples and images have been erected to himself; and he is worshipped as a god with the profoundest adoration. His system, which is the second of the three prevailing in China, is confined to the learned. The first sect is that of the followers of Li Laokum, who is said to have flourished more than 500 years before Christ. He taught that God was corporeal, and had many inferior deities under his government. But the most numerous sect is that of those who worship the idol Fo or Fohi, whom they stile the only god of the world, and who was imported into India about 32 years after the death of our Saviour. With respect to the principles of the Chinese people at large, we learn from Le Compte and Duhald, that, after having offered largely to their gods, if disappointed of their assistance, they sue them for damages, and obtain decrees against them from the Mandarins. When their houses are on fire, they hold their gods, which are of wood and of their own making, to the flames, in hopes of stopping their progress. Are these the people whose principles we ought to adopt, or whose conduct it would be wise to imitate? The general declamation on the character of Confucius and of the Chinese,

which it is more than probable our two authors take upon trust, might have answered some purpose, had they followed it up with a minute investigation of the subject, and an accurate comparison between the principles of the philosopher, and those which we esteem divine. But such an enquiry did not suit their purpose, which seems to have been merely to heap up objections, without considering their nature, their force, their tendency, or even their truth.

"The result of the whole matter, then, is, that, notwithstanding the praises so lavishly bestowed on natural reason, it has been proved, by a long experience, to be totally unfit either to lead men to truth, or to restrain them within the bounds of rectitude, that, in every age and climate, when furnished with no higher guide, the learned and the ignorant, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, roving barbarians, and the more enlightened members of cultivated society, have been alike overwhelmed with doubts and difficulties, alike unable to discover the truth, or to apply what they did know to practice, and alike subject to vices degrading to the human character, and injurious to themselves and to society. The same ignorance and corruption which disgraced the Pagan nations of antiquity, overwhelm those of our day. In that state of society in which reason is not fully exerted, little can be expected; but even

where its progress has been most distinguished, we can find no instance of those salutary effects, which our opponents contend it is so well calculated to produce. What inference ought we to draw from a fact so universally and indisputably proved? The only conclusion which a wise man can make from such premises, is,—that, for whatever purpose reason was conferred upon us, we do not find it calculated to guide us of itself, in our most important concerns, either to truth or virtue; and it therefore becomes our duty seriously and patiently to enquire, if haply we may find a guide more sure and certain. On the natural and proper mode of making such an enquiry, I have already spoken at considerable length; and I followed up my remarks, by tracing the outlines of those steps by which we conclude that the Jewish and Christian Revelations are what they pretend to be. Dr Francis and Mr Macleod take a very different method, and come to a very different conclusion; and as they are philosophers of unparalleled eminence and candour, we shall give their reasoning, if such it can be called, a cursory examination.—I say, if such it can be called; for, if they had not talked so much of reason, philosophy, and logic, I should have deemed them totally ignorant of them; and should have conceived their books to be a collection of impertinent dogmas, founded

on ignorance and self-conceit; but as they say the contrary, I shall not at present give them the lie direct.

" The learned Doctor, finding difficulties in the nature and conduct of the world, which his mighty genius cannot unravel, like Alexander at Gordium, cuts the knot he cannot unloose, and most philosophically resolves all into a *concatenation of causes and effects*. An intelligent cause, which we call God, he boldly rejects, as the offspring of fancy, the unphilosophical symbol of nature, the idea of which he boldly confutes, not by reasoning, but by what he calls the philosopher's maxim, *primus in orbe Deos fecit timor*. The Doctor's philosophy is sometimes, I fear, at variance with common sense; otherwise he would scarcely have ventured, without some previous information for the benefit of weak capacities, to adduce a cause so inadequate as fear or fancy for a belief of such importance and magnitude as that of the being of a God. I am still more and more convinced, from further reflection, of the truth of the Psalmist's remark, (see p. 156) in spite of the modest claims to superior discernment, made by this great Philosopher and his enlightened associates. They talk of wisdom in a very high stile, and challenge to themselves unrivalled pre-eminence in science, merely, as it would seem, that they may frighten into their opinions such as are weak

enough to believe their assertions, or to be misled by their more artful insinuations. But, amidst all this learned bustle, they proclaim their folly, by asserting nothing to be the cause of something, and by erecting a non-entity into the rank of sovereign of the universe. Like the *occult qualities*, which were formerly the last resort of presumptuous ignorance, the *concatenation of causes*, though equally unintelligible and absurd, is, with our learned philosopher, of equal efficacy in solving every difficulty. With respect to the conduct of these men, David is equally just. For, in every age, they who have been, or professed to be Atheists, have generally been the most abandoned of men; and though our author talks a great deal about virtue, and declaims largely against vice, it is easy to perceive that it is not from his love to the former, or his detestation of the latter, that he does so, but that he may, with the better grace, abuse the poor Jews and Christians.

" Had Dr F. been led, from the singular history of the Jewish and Christian revelations, to give the whole subject a fair and accurate examination; and had he written with common decency, of the works and opinions of men at least as wise and as respectable as himself, I should have been induced, whatever had been his determination, to give him credit for his candour. But when he asserts, in the outset, " that mira-

cles; being against the order of nature, no testimony can be strong enough to prove them, and that we must again appeal to faith:—that, unless it were more miraculous that a man should be mistaken, than that the miracle happened, we ought not to give credit to such fables: that Moses acknowledged there might be true prophets and real workers of miracles, opposed to those of the Lord Jehovah; that the Jews believed that there were many Gods, and that their own, like others, was merely local; and that Dr Campbell's essay on miracles was unsuccessful:—I can only conceive that he is begging the question, not proving it: that by such rude, unsupported and declaratory assertions, he wishes to impose upon the credulous and unthinking, opinions which he himself has assumed at random. The assertion respecting miracles, has been often and ably answered: and till a reply, very different from rude denials and bare assertions, is opposed to the works of Dr Campbell, of Hugh Farmer, and of the preachers of Boyle's lecture, &c. Bishop Watson, and every Christian, is at liberty to consider the point as settled. An axiom must be obvious and undisputed, or it ceases to be an axiom; it must respect something with which we are perfectly acquainted, and the grounds of which we perceive at first sight. What the Doctor calls the axiom of philosophers, "that no human testimony

can establish the credibility of miracles," is certainly not of this class; it respects something beyond the reach of our personal experience, and therefore cannot be self-evident. The same cause which formed nature, may derange it; and we, who are capable of viewing, judging, and witnessing, the ordinary course of things, are equally capable of bearing witness to any deviation from that course. The sun and moon rise and set with a regularity, as far as our personal experience reaches, never interrupted; but if either of these were to stand still for several hours together, mankind would not readily reason, against the evidence of their senses, that it had been an illusion. No human power can restore a dead man to life.—But, if a case should occur, before a multitude of unconnected people, of a person known to be dead being raised to life by a few words, that multitude would not readily disbelieve their senses, and reason, because they had never seen such a thing before, that it could not be; or, that the person speaking, and the person brought to life, were impostors. The prodigies of the Pagans, which the Doctor confounds with the miracles of Moses, and of Christ, and which he says are equally well attested, because they were implicitly believed by the people, will by no means answer his purpose. The account of them is obscure, and in their nature they are useless and absurd. The period in which they

life, in the history of civil government, and of past times, will answer the purpose in religion, when once it has been fully communicated to any one race of men. When the ceremonies were appointed among the Jews, in commemoration of the miracles wrought at the time of their deliverance from Egypt, and after that great event, it was appointed that,—when their children should say, as would naturally be the case, "what mean you by this service?"—a full explanation should be given them, that those ceremonies might be a memorial for the children of Israel for ever, of what God had done for their fathers. A wiser institution, one more useful or more natural, could not have been contrived. The children would not indeed enjoy the same kind of evidence with their fathers; the nature of the thing rendered that impossible; but it would require much dabbling in the sophistry of philosophical sceptics, to convince a set of sober men, that such evidence as they did enjoy was defective in point of certainty. The first race, born after the miraculous events had happened, were informed by their fathers, that they had been bondmen in Egypt for a long period of time; that Moses had appeared, and told them that he was divinely commissioned to liberate them; and that he had actually performed, in the sight of Egypt, and before the whole people of Israel, works of such a nature as no man could

do unless God were with him. ‘ Of these (they would naturally say) we were eye-witnesses, and of the consequences you yourselves may now judge. These great works the Egyptians and surrounding nations cannot deny, because they yet feel the effects of them. You will therefore find our testimony confirmed by all with whom you can converse, and by every attendant circumstance into which you can inquire. To perpetuate the memorial of these events, the ceremonies about which you have enquired, were instituted; and it belongs to you to communicate the evidence which we have faithfully detailed to you, to your posterity, in order to forward those plans of Providence respecting our nation, which are yet incomplete.’ Such is the nature of the testimony for the miracles both of Moses and of Christ, and it is a testimony absolutely incontestible. The affairs of every age and nation have proceeded upon it, and have done so with perfect security. It will therefore be found, on a minute enquiry, that in the circumstances attending the attestation of Judaism and Christianity, and in the mode of continuing the evidence to posterity, there is more attention paid to the nature of men and of things, than our wise philosophers are probably aware of; more than was consistent with imposture, or can be reconciled with any species of deception. It deserves to be remarked, indeed, that

the ancient circumstances of almost every nation, are obscure, and the accounts which have come down to us fabulous. But why are they thus obscure and fabulous? The reason is obvious,—no contemporary records or memorials of the transactions of those ancient times have descended to us. Had any intelligent writer of the age of Fergus our first king, given an accurate account of the state of the country, and of the transactions during that reign; had he published it at that time; and had it been regularly preserved and believed, from that age to this, we should have been obliged to give as much credit to that account, as to that of any historian, in the latest period of society. So it was with the Jews; and so it happens that we have more accurate accounts of their origin and early circumstances, than of any other people so ancient. The certainty of their history, and of that of Christianity, is also confirmed by a variety of attending circumstances, and casual or necessary coincidents, of which we are fully able to judge, and which perfectly agree with, and confirm the original accounts.

"In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses points out to the Israelites the end of the law he had given them, exhorts them, by the strongest arguments, to obedience, and dissuades them, lest they should be seduced from their duty, from having any connection with the idolatrous nations which surround-

ed them. The law had been established, and their independence secured, by an interposition evidently divine; and had been confirmed to them by signs, in their number and circumstances unequivocally certain. These signs were no more to be repeated to so great an extent, because the purpose was now attained for which they had been afforded. It was necessary, therefore, to warn the people against the seductions of impostors, by informing them that no more such wonders were to be performed till the appearance of that prophet who, like Moses, should also establish his religion by the influence of divine power. In the 13th chapter, he puts the strongest possible case: 'If a prophet should arise, and, for the purpose of turning you away from the Lord your God to serve other gods, should give you a sign or a wonder, which should come to pass, you must remember what great things the Lord has done for you; reject the artful impostor, and prove yourselves worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. Trifling coincidences may casually happen; delusive prodigies, like those of the magicians in Egypt, may be performed. So far they may be permitted to try you; prove therefore your stedfastness, by rejecting them, and you will easily be enabled to do so by bearing constantly in your mind those great events which you have witnessed, which no human foresight could have combined, no

human power have accomplished.' Such, from the connection, is the natural interpretation of this passage; and such is the general opinion of the learned respecting it. A candid man would have at least noticed such an interpretation before he had drawn, from a detached view of the passage, a conclusion so inconsistent with the whole tenor of the Jewish religion and Mosaic history, as that of Dr Francis is. His conclusion, from verses 23d and 24th of the xi. chap. of Judges, is equally hasty and unfair. The whole tenor of the Jewish books, and of the conduct of Providence with respect to that people, was to convince them, by the most unequivocal proof, 'That *there was no god in all the earth but the God of Israel: that the Lord he is God, in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; and that there is none else beside him.* The mention of *Chemosh*, therefore, the God of the Amorites, was evidently by way of ridicule; and to prove, by his insignificance and inability to protect the people who worshipped him, that he was a non-entity, like Dr F.'s *concatenation of causes.*

From p. 24. to p. 41., our learned author undertakes to disprove the genuineness of the Pentateuch; and though there is not, in the course of those pages, one solid argument; one instance of candid enquiry, or patient investigation; he is confident that he has obtained his purpose, by the boldness

and learned appearance of his assertions, with which he has sparingly mixed a few truths with false conclusions, to make them pass more easily. He begins by mistating and mutilating the arguments adduced by Bishop Watson for the authenticity of those books. His Lordship mentions Maimonides, because he drew up a direct confession of faith upon the subject, which was received, and is still believed by all his countrymen; but he carries the evidence to much higher antiquity, by arguments which the Doctor has not yet disproved. But we shall attend to the Doctor's arguments, or rather assertions, which are five in number, by which he thinks the credit of these books is completely invalidated. 1*st*, He tells us, that the best informed old fathers of the Church believed, that, during the captivity, the Jewish books were absolutely lost; and, in support of this assertion, he quotes *Bellarmin de Scrip. Eccles.* who was however no old father of the church, and who only says that the books were dispersed into various places, and collected by Ezra, and Jerom, who says the same, even in the passages which he has quoted. 2*dly*, He says, "we know that no canon of books ever existed among the Jews, till the time of the synagogues under the Maccabees." This objection should have come in before the former, and we shall therefore consider them together. The Doctor asserts, that though,

in the older Jewish books, such as Kings and Chronicles, the name of Moses is mentioned, yet no word answering to the five books of the Pentateuch is to be found; and that the code of the laws of Moses seems to have been forgotten." These assertions are false; for, besides the circumstance, obvious to the most inattentive, that the existence of the law of Moses is generally taken for granted in those books, it is particularly mentioned more than once. In 2. Chron. xvii. 9. are these words: "And they (the priests and Levites) taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them." In the same book, Chap. xxxiii. ver. 8. we read, "Neither will I remove the foot of Israel out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers, so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them according to the law, and the statutes, and the ordinances by the hand of Moses." The mention made 2. Chron. xxxiv. 14. &c. and 2. Kings xxii. 8. &c., of the book of the law given by Moses being found by Hilkiah, and sent to Shaphan, by no means proves, as Dr F. asserts, that it was the law strictly speaking. The two tables of stone had been deposited in the ark by Moses, as we are informed, 1 Kings viii. 9. and 2 Chron. v. 10., and the finding them would be nothing remarkable. During the impious reign of Manasseh, the law of Moses had indeed been neglected, and its statutes

and ordinances had been broken, but there is not the smallest reason to suspect that it was either lost or forgot. The probability, therefore, is, that this copy was either the original, or an authentic public transcript. For though, when it was read to Josiah, he rent his cloaths, probably on account of the neglect it had fallen under during his father's reign; that he was not ignorant of it, is certain, from his attention previous to this, in reforming the abuses which his father had introduced contrary to it. It might, however, happen, from the circumstances in which he had been educated, that he was not so well acquainted with all its sanctions and provisions, as he should have been. But, besides the books of Kings and Chronicles, we find the law of Moses, very particularly mentioned in Joshua. See chap. viii. 30. to the end, xi. 15 and xxiv. 25. 26.

"Though there were no synagogues publicly established in Judea before the captivity, which, however, is by no means so evident as the Doctor thinks; * there were certain provisions respecting the law of Moses, which rendered it impossible that it should be lost. It was preserved with the most watchful attention; each expression was deemed sacred, and the very letters were numbered. Each

* See Psalm 74. v. 8.

prince was obliged to take a copy of it, from that which was before, the priests, the Levites, Deut. xvii. 18. 19. xxvii. 3. xxxi. 10. 11: and the people were particularly enjoined to teach it to their children, and to wear it as signs on their heads and frontlets, between their eyes; a precept bold and figurative, but extremely expressive of its importance. See Exod. xiii. 9. Levit. x. 11. and Deut. vi. 6. 9. 21. and xi. 18. 19. Though, therefore, during the idolatrous reigns, it was sometimes neglected, it could neither be lost nor forgotten. The schools of the prophets, each tribe, and particularly the Levites, whose business it was to read the law in all its parts, would of course be furnished with copies. But, besides these circumstances, forming the strongest and most natural evidence which can be brought for the authenticity of any book,—there is another which must appear to our opponents at least, to be still less equivocal; I mean the agreement between the Hebrew and Samaritan Pentateuch. The revolt of the ten tribes was followed by an irreconcileable hatred between them and the remaining two. These tribes carried the Pentateuch along with them, and acknowledged none of the subsequent books as divine, and yet, except an alteration evidently intended to give credit to the opinion that Mount Gerizim was the place chosen for the temple, and a few other trifling variations, the agreement between

it and the Hebrew original is so exact, as evidently to prove that the former has not been interpolated since the time of the revolt under Rehoboam, which happened upwards of 2000 years ago. Having thus such unquestionable evidence, the evidence of keen opponents, that it existed, and was considered as the work of Moses in that period, a child may carry the evidence up to Moses, by steps which cannot be controverted. See *Joseph. Ant.* Lib. 11. and Prideaux's Con. Part 1. book VI.

"But, waving this, the Doctor's strongest argument, viz. that the Jewish books were lost during the captivity, is not quite so certain as he supposes. For, besides that it must have been both easy and natural for a people so attached to their law, to carry it along with them; or, if they could not do so publicly, to secret it, there is direct mention made of the Pentateuch in Daniel ix. 11. 13. during that period; and there can be no reason to suppose, that 70 years captivity would lead them to neglect or forget what from their bondage they would naturally be inclined the more to respect; see also Tobit, ch. vii. 12. viii. 13. Ezra, therefore, did no more than collect the scattered books into one volume, probably interspersing a few remarks in the Pentateuch, for its elucidation or connection with the other books. That they were publicly read after the return from the captivity, appears from Ezra

the sanctions by which they were originally enforced.

" When a man sits down to examine opinions or facts which have much attracted the notice of the learned, and have undergone much serious investigation, if he has any regard to character or candour, he will pay some attention to what has been thus produced on the subject, and he will cautiously avoid renewing those assertions and objections which have been previously obviated; at least, he will take care to examine the grounds of the arguments which have been brought to answer them. But Dr Francis proceeds, as if no such answers ever had been made, and concludes, without affording any other reason than his *ipse dixit*, that Zoroaster, Sanchoniatho, &c. were the originals from whence Genesis was compiled. If he had looked at Dr Hyde's *Relig. Vet. Persarum*, (cap. 10. p. 176, and cap. 24. p. 314, &c.) a book which was thought by the infidels of the early part of this century to be peculiarly favourable to their cause, he would have found some reason to believe that Zoroaster was himself of Jewish extraction, educated among the Jews, and well versed in the books of the Old Testament, and in the ancient traditions. According to the most accurate accounts, he lived a little previous to the Trojan war, at least 200 years after the Jews had received their law, and were settled in

the promised land; and Sanchoniatho flourished much about the same time. It is, however, not a little absurd, to oppose to such a book as that of Moses, sanctioned by the universal belief of a great nation in every age,—the principles of men, whose works are lost, and of whom we know so little. It will be worth the while of those who have any doubts on this subject, and who are disposed to be less dogmatical than the Doctor, to look into the works of those authors who have treated the subject with more precision, and who have confirmed their reasoning by less equivocal appeals to the opinions of the ancients. See, in particular, *Grotius on the truth of the Christian Religion*, Book I. sect. 15. and 16. with Le Clerc's notes, and *Huet's Demonstratio Evangelica*, Prop. iv. cap. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

"The Doctor's *fourth* argument respects the language of the Pentateuch. He says, the Hebrew is a dialect of the Phœnician, which is so far true. Eupolemus, in his book of the kings of Judea, says, "that Moses was the first wise man, and that letters were first taught by him to the Jews, and from them the Phœnicians received them." The language of the two countries, therefore, if not the same, were very nearly allied. But because it is said, Psalm 81. 5. that when the Israelites went out of Egypt, they heard a language which they understood not, and though when they left that

country, they might speak Egyptian,—it does not therefore follow, that the Hebrew Pentateuch is a translation; nor, if it were so, would it of course lose all credit. But there is not the smallest reason for supposing that it is a translation; there is not the smallest evidence for such a supposition, either direct or indirect. The Jews, while in Egypt, lived apart from that people; and, though they might learn their language, they might still preserve and cultivate their own; which was the more probable, as their manners were so different from those of the nation in which they sojourned. During the captivity, many of the people forgot their original language; and, on their return, had a Chaldaic version read along with it; but, though the Hebrew letter was changed for the Chaldee, as our black letter was changed for the Roman, they esteemed the original language too valuable to be tampered with; and even at this day, there are few among them who do not understand a little Hebrew, as much, at least, as to be able to go through the service of the synagogue.

" Fifthly, The Doctor says, in the books of the Old Testament, we find abundant proofs that they have been written in an age greatly posterior to that of Moses." The first passage he mentions as proving this, is that in Gen. xii. 6., and repeated in chap. xiii. 7. ' and the Canaanite was then in the

land.' From these chapters, it appears that Abraham and Lot, travelling together, found themselves incommoded for want of room, for the Canaanite and Perizzite were also in the land; a sense which the words and passage will certainly bear, and which a man, not bent on finding objections at every step, would naturally have given to it. The next is from Deut. i. 5. where the Doctor says, ' *this* side of Jordan is given in the translation for *that* side.' Had he been less hasty in his conclusion, however, he would have found that the original word bears indifferently both senses, and that thus Schindler and Buxtorf have explained it. He next informs us, that in chap. xxxiii. we find this expression: ' There never was in Judea so great a prophet as Moses.' This is not true. The only expression similar to it is in chap. xxxiv. where, at verse 10. are these words: ' And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,' &c. Now, that this whole chapter was inserted by Joshua or Ezra, is generally understood; but, that such insertion invalidates the whole Pentateuch, will require something more than assertion to prove. Indeed, that this whole chapter belongs not to Deuteronomy, but to Joshua, and has been misplaced in the arrangement of the chapters, which is a mode of division entirely modern, is extremely probable, from the commencement

of the latter book, as it stands in our bibles. The remainder of this letter our philosopher occupies with further unsupported declamation upon the Pagan mysteries, the origin, as he wisely supposes, of the law of Moses; and he finishes with some violent aspersions on the character of that legislator, and some very impertinent language to the Bishop of Landaff. In the next letter he re-produces the text Gen. xxxvi. 31. 'And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.' By comparing it, however, with Gen. xvii. 17., and with Deut. xvii. 14., where kings are promised of the seed of Abraham to reign over Israel, the objection is removed, even if we grant it to be an interpolation. There was some propriety in the insertion, if it be such, to shew the people, that though it was accomplished in the race of Esau, it also referred to that of Jacob. If he denies the existence of the prophecy, he denies, by mere assertion, what the circumstances of this people, as well as their general belief, strongly combine to prove. The Doctor's impertinence to the Bishop, which runs through several of the following pages, is totally unworthy of notice, and will sink harmless into oblivion, as if it had never been uttered. In comparing the compositions of the East with those of the Bible, the good Doctor betrays his ignorance pretty

conspicuously; as, if you bear in mind the passage I quoted from Sir William Jones, (see p. 96.) you will readily grant; and when he tells the Bishop, that even the men of his profession have long ago given up the idea of its beauty, as a ridiculous conceit, you will probably conceive, that when he speaks of a *madman's reveries*, he means his own.

" He again renews, in the remainder of his third letter, his favourite disquisition on the Eastern mysteries, and finishes it with a few more paragraphs of abusive language against Moses, Abraham, and Sarah, and even against the Almighty himself. To detail these, with others in the course of his book, equally scandalous and unjust, would be to join in his crime. The language of Mr Macleod is equally bold and blasphemous, and is equally undeserving of particular notice. In general, it may be said on this head, that, when men thus give a licence to their malice, and, instead of argument, make use of invective, the cause they defend is wretched and untenable. When, from partial views and detached texts, mutilated and misrepresented, they blacken the character of the patriarchs, and abuse the nature of their religion, it must be evident to the most inattentive, that the love of truth is fled. When they rest on quibbles, and persist in explanations and conclusions, which were never allowed, and

which their opponents have proved, cannot fairly be given; when, in that which the wisest men, after much patient enquiry, have conceived to be sublime, beautiful, and consistent, they still persist, without noticing what has been thus adduced, that all is grovelling, stupid, and confused; that the authors were scoundrels or ideots, and that their admirers are fools and knaves,—the most unthinking must perceive, in such conduct, not a love of truth or science, but a perverseness beyond redemption, or an ignorance beyond the power of improvement. An Athiest, which Dr Francis professes to be, may indeed go any lengths. Nothing which he can either say or do can be unbecoming his character. But a Deist should be made of milder stuff, and should never be disposed to wrangle where he ought patiently to seek for truth, or to indulge in invective in place of reason. The man, however, who possesses such an opinion of Deists will generally find himself deceived, as the impious book of Thomas Paine, and the no less scurrilous production of A. Macleod, abundantly prove. The Bible-history is generally a plain and unimbellished narrative. The characters and conduct of the Patriarchs and of the Jews, are given with every symptom of justice. Their good actions are sparingly praised; and it was not the purpose of the authors to aggravate their bad ones. The principles on which they ought to have acted, are minutely laid

down, and form a code of morality which was never equalled, till the coming of Christ. Some of the leading characters are highly interesting, but none of them were, or are represented as, perfect. Their failings, and even their crimes, are faithfully detailed; and as their virtues are exhibited to encourage us to follow their example, so their backslidings are enumerated to warn us of our danger. To find so many illustrious characters, so much pure virtue, and so much good conduct, in an age so little improved, is wonderful. But to detach the good parts of those characters from the bad, and to judge of the latter by the morality of the Gospel, of which they were ignorant, and by the manners and principles which obtain in our times, is unjust and unphilosophical. Judge of them by their own age; compare their general conduct with their own principles, and the result will be highly in their favour. Another fertile subject of abusive invective, is, the representation of God, and of his conduct to the nations which surrounded the Jews, which proceeds on total misconception, and often on the most pertinacious abuse of terms and things. No man can read the Bible through, without perceiving that the representation of the Deity is the most sublime and spiritual of which language is capable. But our thoughts are so very different from his thoughts, and our ways from his ways, that

it became absolutely necessary to aid our conceptions, by using terms with which we are acquainted; and in the account of his transactions with our race, to divest him in some measure of his spiritual majesty, and to veil his incomprehensible nature under terms adapted to human capacities.—Wretched, beyond what can be expressed, must that man's mind be, which is capable of turning such awful condescension into ridicule and contempt; and unprincipled *must* be the cause which requires it. Of the conduct of that mighty Being we can be no judges. Sufficient evidence appears in the conduct, circumstances, and nature of the Jewish and Christian religions, which no art could have contrived, no assiduity have combined, to prove that they have been specially under the Divine protection; and, if we are sometimes at a loss how to square, with our notions of propriety, all the instances of his vengeance on different nations, and of his love to others, we must at least grant, that it is a subject beyond the reach of the keenest human intellect. Punishment is necessary in moral government:—The justice of what takes place naturally, and to almost all our crimes some natural punishment is annexed, no man, the atheist excepted, is bold enough to arraign; and it is an inference equally natural and just to suppose, that his other means of vengeance are equally tenable. It was a noble saying

of the philosopher, respecting the writings of Heraclitus, and justly may it be applied to the scriptures, and the conduct of Providence: "What I understand is excellent; and, I presume, what I understand not to be so too." It certainly requires a greater compass of thought, and more soundness of reflection, than some men are aware of, to know when and where to stop in our researches; to restrain our imagination within the bounds of nature and experience; and to crop its luxuriance, by a due proportion of diffidence and candour. But to proceed:

"Dr F. informs us, that the Chinese records prove, that at the time the flood is said to have happened, that country was inhabited; but the only fact he adduces in proof, is, that of an eclipse recorded among that people, to have happened 256 years after that event; at which time he says, Egypt and China were overstocked with inhabitants, which he infers could not have so soon happened, if that calamity had been real. That this inference is unjust, will appear from the following calculation respecting the first peopling of the world, which may easily be applied to this: "Though we should suppose that Adam and Eve had no other children but Cain and Abel, in the year of the world 128, which we prove to be the time of Abel's murder, it must be allowed that they had daughters married with those two sons.

thereof." It is certain, that the art of ship-building was not brought to perfection in the time of Moses; nor could that historian ever have drawn out of his own imagination, so just an idea of a floating structure. See further, *Saurin's dissertations on the Old Testament*, Diss. 8. On the whole, we may hint to the Doctor and his learned friend, that they would do well to investigate before they determine; and that, when they do determine, they should give us reasons, and not assertions. The productions of the East, which they seem to think so favourable to their cause, have been perused during the present age with much assiduity, and have been considered by the most intelligent and candid men, who have supported their conclusions with proof, as not only not invalidating, but confirming the credit of the sacred records. But all these labours and conclusions, our two philosophers can easily confute, in their usual way, with " I have perused and considered them, but I do not *think* them just; or, I have not yet had leisure to read them, but I *know* they are false."

" Passing by a bundle of unjust and abusive assertions, the next thing of note which we shall notice in the Doctor's wonderful confutation, is, what he says of the pillar of fire. " We know science too well, says he, to believe that the pillar of fire that went before the Israelites, was God him-

self." It is no where said that it was. The passage, as evidently as words can make it, means no more than that, by this manifestation, besides the actual assistance it gave them, the Almighty undertook, in an especial manner, to defend the Israelites from the enemy who were in pursuit of them. But the Doctor tells us, that a pan with red hot substances would have had the same appearance. This is very scientific, and, as all modern science depends on, and ought to be supported by, experiment, it may be worth his while to try, if, by such a contrivance, he can so impose on any set of men at present in the world; and if he shall succeed, he will have it in his power to establish the religion of his supreme Deity,—the concatenation of causes and effects. In his 4th letter, this great man comes to the book of Joshua; and, after mistating his opponent's arguments, and indulging in a little impertinent scurrility, as his custom is, he pronounces it to be spurious, and of no authority. With respect to the sun standing still, which is related in the book of Joshua, Bishop Watson has quoted an ancient tradition of the Egyptian priests, not because it actually proves the truth of the fact, but because Thomas Paine says no nation knew any thing about it. The Doctor, having expressed his astonishment at such an appeal, to prove what he calls so bare-

faced a lie, which is not a little like taking the thing for granted, gives an account of a supposed revolution of the four cardinal-points, to which he says the passage, quoted by the Bishop, alludes; and he goes on to shew, that, upon astronomical principles, such a thing could not have happened, without throwing the whole globe, &c. into confusion; and he refers the Bishop again to the Chinese history. (By the bye, has the learned Doctor examined, with accuracy, the antiquity and genuineness of their records, that he so often appeals to them?) Now, we may reasonably ask this great man, Whether he was present at the creation, that he knows so exactly what can or cannot be?—"Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding.—Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?—Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?" Astronomy is an useful science; and probably Bishop Watson, and such as think as he does, understand it as well as the Doctor, or any of his friends: but our shallow understandings and limited experience cannot determine things of much easier compass than the possible casualties of the Universe. These are neither in the hands of the Doctor nor of us. Even his beloved *concatenation* would resist the indignity of

submitting to his direction, or of being controuled by his conceptions. But he mistakes the case altogether, probably because he never read Joshua's account of it. He talks as if it had been represented that the sun rose where it sets, or as if it had changed its course; and then he adds,—" Had this been the case, (I am ashamed of the supposition) how could the earth change its axis in an hour?" &c.—Now unfortunately all this display of learning is vain; for Joshua informs us of nothing which renders the supposition of a change in the earth's axis necessary. He only says, that " the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down a whole day," which would be accomplished without any change of the earth's axis, and by the bare stoppage of its diurnal motion, in whatsoever part of its course it might be. It would be worth the Doctor's while to read the Bible attentively before he again attempts to confute it. He has probably confounded with the miracle of the sun's standing still, that mentioned 2 Kings xx. 11., and Isaiah xxxviii. 8. of the shadow of the sun going back ten degrees, such *trifling* errors being pretty common with our philosophers, notwithstanding the keenness of their talents. I cannot help remarking here a great triumph of Thomas Paine on this subject:—After ridiculing the account of the sun standing still, he asks, But why must the moon stand still? what

occasion could there be for moonlight in the day time, and that too whilst the sun shined? This quibbler takes some pains to ridicule the astronomical error of Joshua, who wrote in compliance with the use of common language, and he here really falls into an infinitely grosser one himself. If the apparent motion of the heavenly bodies depends on the real motion of the earth round its axis, the stoppage of that real motion must stop the apparent motion of them all; and the moon, stars, and planets, must appear equally stationary with the sun. Tom's astronomy does not seem to be very accurate. Joshua appears to have known more of the matter, at least, than this modern sciolist.

"The Doctor next proceeds to mention a passage of Joshua, which he thinks of sovereign efficacy in proving the spuriousness of that book. It is stated, Joshua xv. 63. that the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Judah at Jerusalem. In Judges i. 8. Jerusalem is stated to have been taken by the children of Judah. This whole verse is a parenthesis, and seems, as it stands, to refer to a conquest of this city, previous to the bringing Adonibezek thither. If this was the case, the Jebusites might be again allowed to inhabit the place; and that they did so, we are informed in the 21st verse of this same chapter. But perhaps it might be an explanatory insertion by Ezra, to which opinion, its being by way of parenthesis, gives much pro-

bability, especially when we compare it with Judges xix. 10. where there is also a parenthetical insertion after the word Jebus, to inform us that it is the same as Jerusalem. The final expulsion of the Jebusites happened in the reign of David, and is recorded in 2. Samuel v. But nothing can be more obvious than the reasoning of Bishop Watson, viz. that such casual insertions, in an after age, for the sake of elucidation, can be no real objection to the general credit of any book. These insertions doubtless served an important purpose at the time, and would not be mistaken; but had the whole of those books, in which such passages are found, been forged, or intended to mislead, some external traces of the deception would have appeared; some hints to lead us to the origin of it; and some appearance of mistrust in the people. On the contrary, we find that the ancient Talmudists, and the voice of general tradition, without exception, positively attribute the book to Joshua, and in the *Bava Bathra*, cap. 1. it is added, that he wrote the eight last verses of the law. I should have mentioned before, that our physician contends, that what is called the law of Moses, is nothing more than what is contained in Exodus chap 20. to chap. 24.; and that the writer of it certainly knew not that the Pentateuch existed—why? because, says he, he would in that case have recommended to the Levites to

keep the records of mankind; and he also asserts, that the ten commandments every body knows from the light of nature: Now, this last assertion is certainly false; for though the existence and worship of one God might occasionally amuse speculative men, it never, till among the Jews, formed the practical belief of any nation. But when the Doctor made this assertion, he surely forgot that he is himself an athiest: Four of the ten commandments respect our duty to God, but not one of them gives us a hint of his favourite concatenation. The former assertions of our author, are equally or more absurd, and proceed upon an idea so extremely ridiculous, as to be almost unworthy of confutation. The Jewish nation believe that they got their law from Moses: They make no exceptions: They entertain no doubt of it. The moral, the judicial, and ceremonial law, they received at the same time; and the whole, with some important pieces of history, is contained in the Pentateuch, which formed originally but one book, with no other division but that of great and little sections. It will not therefore be thought a very important objection to any work, that one small part of it does not quote and recommend another.

" As I do not intend to trace this indefatigable objector through all his turnings and windings, through all his blasphemous remarks, and unjust assertions, through all

his hasty conclusions, and rude aspersions, I shall only remark, in general, that I know no greater evidence of violent prejudice, and pertinacious obstinacy, than that anxious wish to calumniate every character and transaction; to reduce all to imposture and the most abandoned corruption, so apparent in this author, and his two friends so often named. You can think of no one passage, no one character, no one transaction, in the whole sacred volume, in judging of which they will allow the slightest room for a candid or mild construction. :— Yet, with all their venom and all their art, by selecting, detaching, comparing, and ridiculing various passages and circumstances, they will certainly fail to convince any thinking person, either of their own sense, or of the justice of their conduct as polemics. It is not a little remarkable, however, that while the good characters recorded in scripture are thus shamefully traduced, the really bad often meet with pity and compassion. Thus, over the son, whom Noah cursed, over Korah and his company, over the Canaanites and over Saul, &c. they seem to hint at something approaching to lamentation; and had not the executors of vengeance withdrawn them to the more agreeable exercise of invective, perhaps they might have mourned over the calamities of those sufferers. They probably have a fellow-feeling for those men, because it is likely they ex-

perience in themselves those dispositions which led to their crimes, that obstinacy for which they suffered. Instead of the language in which Mr M. indulges, however, respecting the curse pronounced by Noah on one of his sons, for a crime, the whole circumstances of which he could not know, it would have been worth his while to enquire, whether there is not strong evidence that it took effect; and whether, at this moment, it is not fulfilling. I am no advocate for slavery, and do not pretend to penetrate into the purpose of Divine Providence in the execution of such a judgment. That it has been executed, and still obtains, however, is the strongest possible proof of the truth of what Moses relates; and most completely confutes the hasty and unsupported assertion of Mr M. that it was an artful episode, inserted to heighten the enmity between the Israelites and Canaanites. Though, however, I believe that no human power can alleviate this curse till it shall please the Almighty to remove it; in order to avoid misrepresentation, I will add, that it affords no argument to any man to engage or persist in the slave-trade. "It must needs be that offences come, but wo to them by whom they do come." The Doctor tells us gravely, that Moses murdered Korah, &c. because they opposed his usurpations; and Mr M. contends, that this might have been the effect of a casual earthquake,

or some such thing. The days of hypotheses are not yet over; nor do those of our day appear to be much better grounded than those of antiquity. It is certainly remarkable, if Moses was the bad man the Doctor contends, and performed so many distinguished actions, only to glut insatiable revenge, and to gratify a daring ambition; that, with so little power as he naturally possessed, and among so obstinate a people as the Jews, he should have been so successful in all his enterprises even against numerous bodies of men, without leaving one mark of collusion, or a single cause for just suspicion. It is equally remarkable, if he was merely an artful man, and took advantage of great public events, or natural calamities, to raise his power by pretending to have caused them; that so many of those events and calamities were, so fortunately for his scheme, combined together; that not one person, in all antiquity, has been able to bring such a charge home to him, or can even prove that his own advantage was his aim. Mr M., however, asserts, that if Mahomet had been at war with the *Italians* when Catania, Lima and Lisbon *disappeared*, it would have been set down in the Koran as miraculous, and the Ottoman Empire would have believed it as the act of their prophet. Now, why he mentions *Italy*, it is not easy to conceive; the only one of those places which can be said to be at all connected with Ita-

ly, is Catania, a sea-port town of Sicily, at the foot of Mount Etna. Lima is the capital of Peru, in America; Lisbon is the capital of Portugal, and the disastrous earthquakes which severally happened at them, did not occur at the same time:—But these are trifling mistakes for *Maſter M'Leod*, (see p. 149.) But whatever the prophet might have pretended, unless he had particularly foretold those events, or actually preceded those calamities by some external act, it is not so obvious as this gentleman supposes, that he would have obtained belief. One thing, at least, is certain, that he never committed his claim, as a prophet, to so fair a trial.

" With respect to the Canaanites, our candid opponents tell us, that their only crime was, their defending their country against the Israelites; which is a gross mistatement, as they were odious for almost every kind of corruption and debauchery. Of Saul, the Doctor tells us, that he was dethroned, because he was humane enough not to cut Agag in pieces, which is absolutely false.—He should have reflected, that Saul utterly destroyed the people of Amalek, and only saved Agag, (who seems to have been a monster of iniquity, and to have received the due reward of his crimes,) some sheep, and some oxen, on pretence of religion, though contrary to the express command of God. It was, therefore, not for

humanity, but for obstinacy and disobedience, that he was dethroned, as is clearly expressed; with such clearness, strength and propriety, indeed, as is not easily to be mistaken. " Behold, to obey, is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For *rebellion*, is as the sin of witchcraft, and *stubbornness* is as iniquity and idolatry." 1 Sam. xv. 22. 23.

" The Doctor, of whose manner we have certainly had a sufficient specimen, goes on with his remarks on the other books, and uniformly uses invective for argument, and assertion for authority, mutilation for candour, and misrepresentation for justice; and his last letter is taken up with a collection of detached texts, which he intersperses with remarks, as absurd and infamous as the collection is unjust and partial. On these, and on his mistatement of the prophecies, I had intended to make some particular remarks; but no man, capable of thinking for himself, can be misled by the *ipse dixits* of a man who has so glaringly exhibited his own ignorance, obstinacy, and want of candour. Among his texts are chiefly found those which have the appearance of cruelty, which he takes care to aggravate, whilst, by concealing the connection, he endeavours to deprive us of the means of judging whether they were not acts of retributive justice; and in the story of Jael, who killed Sisera, by driving *a nail* through his temples, and fastening it to the ground, he

wishes to raise a laugh, by calling it *a goodly nail*; but it is at his own expence. For I presume he is the first person who ever conceived that what is here called *a nail of the tent*, was one only an inch or two long. We have often read, during the present war, in the list of implements and effects taken from the enemy, of nails or spikes of 13½ inches long; and if the Doctor had allowed himself time for enquiry, he would have found that the Hebrew word יתד, in Greek ἦλος, and in Latin *palus*, *paxillus*, or *clavus*, signified a stake, peg, pin, spike, wedge or nail. By such disgraceful misrepresentations, would this fellow deprive us of our religion and our virtue. I say of our virtue also; for, on turning to his remarks on the character and writings of Solomon, after making some shamefully partial extracts, he says that those holy books were not written with a view to make us avoid his sins and debaucheries; than which a greater falsehood never was asserted. Of all the crimes of which mankind have been guilty, I believe none have been accompained with more baneful consequences, than the illicit commerce of the sexes. Could we collect into one sum, the number of women devoted to this wretched profession, and the number of thoughtless young men whom they deprive of health, fortune, and principle; with a view of all the miserable consequences which follow to themselves, and to the world, it would

stagger and alarm the most thoughtless. Except we had such an account well authenticated, and strongly enforced, where can we find a dissuasive from such indulgence more powerful and striking than in the character of a man, who, high in dignity, eminent in power, and distinguished for wisdom, fell a wretched victim to this disgraceful habit; and found it, what the highest and the meanest will equally find it,—not only to be vanity, but vexation of spirit? Or, where shall we find stronger or juster arguments against it, than in the book of Proverbs? But our virtuous Doctor, after having passed to a variety of other matter, concludes his 5th letter, in which he had made his remarks on Solomon, with these words: "I have purposely omitted to speak of Ecclesiastes: I find here several Epicurean notions, a disbelief of a future life, the propriety of enjoying themselves in this life, and other sensible remarks; which prove that the writer enjoyed more common sense than most of his countrymen." I should not wonder, after this, if he would next assert that black is white, or white black: No book can have a more virtuous tendency, or can speak, with greater clearness and force, of a future life and universal judgement, than the book of Ecclesiastes. The Doctor, however, whilst he thus grossly falsifies Solomon's intentions, with sufficient clearness explains his own. But I will neither stain

my own lips, nor insult your feelings, by giving my opinion of a man, who would thus reduce us to the lowest state of vice and degradation in this world, and snatch from us the fond hope of something after death. "Seest thou a wise man in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

"Having already detained you so very long, I shall not waste your time by going over Mr Macleod's virulent and incoherent rhapsody on the Old Testament, especially as, in addition to the specimens we have already seen of his manner, we shall have a further opportunity of judging of him, when we come to treat particularly of Christianity. I shall only further remark here, then, that, in the course of his disquisition on the Old Testament, he expresses great horror at some representations of the Deity there made; and, because that Almighty Being fills all space, he very philosophically conceives that it is impossible he can manifest himself in any one spot. But he treats all those subjects in such a style, and feels difficulties and disgust in such numerous instances, that, notwithstanding his affected gravity, I cannot believe that he is serious, or that, by such pretended difficulties, and such exclamations of horror, he has any other intention or object, than to excite, by false assertions and unjust insinuations, a detestation of a book, the arguments for which he dares not fairly meet.

"The rise of Christianity stands unequalled and unrivalled in the history of the human race, and well deserves the serious consideration of every sober and candid enquirer after truth. So many circumstances concur in the conduct of this singular event, to increase the wonder and astonishment it excites, and to add to its credibility, that he must be a very incurious man, whose attention is not arrested by them; and very ill qualified to give a candid judgement respecting the nature and evidence of any fact, who does not at least perceive and allow the singular superiority, in these respects, which it holds over every similar claim to belief which has yet been made in the world.

"The circumstances attending the rise and progress of this religion, are so numerous, and of such a nature, as completely to preclude the possibility of imposture, of enthusiasm, or of delusion. Our infidel opponents employ themselves with an assiduity, worthy of a better cause, in making previous objections to revelation in general, and minute objections to particular parts of it; but the general result of the whole circumstances, they are uniformly either unwilling, or unable, to estimate. Unfair inferences are easily drawn from a partial view of a copious and diversified subject; and it requires a degree of humility and candour, not often found among those self-sufficient mortals, who call themselves philosophers, to resist

the impulse of mis-representing what is so much calculated to humble their pride, and to controul their prejudices. If, on a general view, however, of any subject, it shall be found to be entitled to credit, this credit will not be annihilated, nor seriously weakened, though it should turn out to be impossible perfectly to reconcile to every mind all its component parts; and though, on a partial view, some things may appear incongruous, because this apparent incongruity may be, and probably is, the effect of ignorance or misconception on our part, which the better information, or more candid views of another, may enable him to obviate. The credibility of a fact established by numerous witnesses, suppose in a criminal case, will not be lessened, though, by the industry and acuteness of the defendant's counsel, a considerable variety may be shewn in the different relations of the several particulars; and the reason is obvious. The different witnesses may have been acquainted with different particulars; or may have become acquainted with what they knew, by different means, and in different circumstances; or, they may have varied in their mode of judging of the particulars they observed, from the variety which naturally subsists in the mental qualities of different men. But whatever variety of shades their private notions, (or prejudices, if you will,) may give to the component parts of the transaction, the result of the

evidence will be, the complete establishment of the fact, unless they absolutely contradict one another; or, unless it can be shewn that they were deceived themselves, or, by a false account, intended to deceive others. Unless some of these circumstances can be fully made out, the evidence must be credited, and the truth of the fact fully established. So it is with respect to Christianity. An artful sophist may misrepresent particular parts of the proof, and may calumniate particular portions of the system; but when we come seriously and candidly to consider the whole, we perceive a wisdom in the conduct, and a power in the progress of it, to which no human foresight is equal, and to which nothing that ever happened is similar. Had our Saviour appeared as a heroic conqueror,—had he established his religion by open force, or disseminated it by artful delusion, the success which it actually obtained in the world must have struck mankind with astonishment:—but when we find that he overpowered the wisdom of the world by what appeared to it to be but *folly*,—that he resisted the power of his opponents by *weakness*,—and triumphed over their malice even in *death*,—our astonishment must not only be increased, but we must be induced seriously to enquire for reasons to justify an event proceeding from causes so extremely inadequate; and as nothing but divine power seems calculated to

produce such effects in such circumstances, we shall be at least disposed to consider whether the claim to such power be just.

"From the most cursory view of the whole transaction, it is evident that the persons to whom we are indebted, for what we know respecting it, could not be deluded enthusiasts. Men may be deluded into false opinions, and, by various steps, they may degenerate into such a degree of enthusiasm, as even to die in defence of such opinions. But there is a mighty difference between opinions and facts. Opinions may be various, they may be false;—but facts speak for themselves; and no man, or set of men, can be deceived respecting numerous occurrences which actually took place before their eyes, and with the circumstances attending which they were perfectly acquainted. Men may combine to deceive others in such cases, but they cannot be deceived themselves. If Christianity, therefore, is not what it pretends to be, a revelation from Heaven, the persons who gave rise to it, who supported and propagated it, were daring impostors. Let us enquire whether they deserve so serious a charge, by considering the circumstances which preceded, accompanied, and followed their efforts in its promulgation. Our two opponents bestow some pains, in their usual stile of positive assertion, in confuting, as they term it, the prophecies. It is not easy to satisfy these gentlemen: For

where they are so clear and pointed, as to render it impossible that they should be mistaken, they contend that they are not prophetic but historical, and were contrived after the event, to which they allude, happened: Where the contrary is too obvious to be denied, they mangle and misrepresent them; and where they are conceived in terms somewhat obscure, they consider them as rude guesses, signifying nothing. But there is a view of the subject infinitely less equivocal, which they have carefully avoided; which is, that these prophecies excited expectations, and that these expectations were fulfilled. We shall endeavour to state this matter accurately.

"Whatever cavillers may object to the books of the Old Testament, it is an undeniable fact, that they all existed, and were well known, long previous to the birth of Jesus Christ. To the antiquity which they severally claim, nothing solid has ever been objected. It depends on evidence which cannot be controverted, and which infidels, though they cavil at particular parts of what the books contain, must often allow. That they remain unaltered, and as they existed in the earliest ages, except such trifling variations as have been the consequence of frequent transcription, is equally certain; because, before the birth of Christ, such interpolation, if it had escaped the vigilance of the Jewish people, could have served no

purpose; and since that event, the thing was impossible; as both Jews and Pagans would have detected the cheat;—the Jews, from the Hebrew copies in their own possession; and the Pagans from the Greek version, which was made in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, about 270 years before our Lord's nativity. With these books every Jew, from the very nature of his religion, was intimately acquainted. Many of the authors, whose works appear in this collection, passed in Judea for prophets, men divinely inspired; and many passages in them refer to events which they said they foresaw by the divine assistance; and many of which certainly happened after the prophecies, which referred to them, were generally known. The books were, therefore, held in high estimation, and those prophecies, which were evidently fulfilled, or which the Jews believed to be so, afforded them a pledge for the fulfilment of others. Various passages in these prophets seem calculated to direct the attention of the Jews to a certain illustrious Person, to appear among them for certain purposes to which they allude; and such was the effect which they actually had, and the expectation of such a person had long become general in Judea. The prophets applied to him epithets of peculiar dignity, and declared him to be Wonderful, Counseller, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Fa-

ther, the Prince of Peace; that he was the desire of all nations, and that, through him, all the nations of the earth should be blessed; while, with that dignity, they connected circumstances of peculiar meanness and distress. His life was to be mean, and his death ignominious; but the effects of his mission were to be glorious. The first rise of the expectation of Messiah is so very ancient, that it cannot be traced to any source, unless the scripture-account be applied to; and it was considered as so important, that it even reached to other nations, especially in the East. The first prophecies respecting him are recorded by Moses; but if his history deserves credit, the expectation existed long before; and, unless it had done so, it would not have been easy for him to persuade his countrymen that such had been the case. As we proceed in our inquiries, we find that this expectation formed the basis of the Patriarchal systems of religion, and that it was also made the ground-work of the Jewish; and each succeeding prophet, from Moses to Malachi, rivetted the attention of the people to this great event, by unfolding the period of Messiah's appearance, and the circumstances of his birth, life, and death, with more clearness and precision. If general expectation had not been excited by these prophecies, previous to the æra of their fulfilment, the force of the argument derived from them would have been

greatly weakened; because it might have been contended that they were only drawn from their obscurity to forward the purposes of ambition and delusion; or if, notwithstanding the expectations they raised, nothing had happened by which their fulfilment might be proved, whatever veneration they might still be held in by the Jews, they could never have attracted the notice, or induced the belief, of any other people. If even those expectations which they excited, had been applied, by artful individuals, to forward and sanction the attempts of ambition, and the lust of power, though the coincidence might have been striking, and to the Jews convincing, room would still have been left, for unconcerned spectators, to suspect collusion and deceit. But when we find that such attempts were unsuccessfully made, both before and after the public appearance of our Saviour, and when we find that He who met with every species of indignity, and possessed no natural means of resistance, completely succeeded in what he undertook, and completely fulfilled what had been foretold,—the case is materially altered. The Jewish apostacy adds great force to this argument. For, had the whole of that nation been converted, our worthy philosophic brethren, who are never slow at making suppositions, and never shy in following them up by assertions, would doubtless have told us that the whole affair was mere collusion, and that the pro-

ecies were formed to add weight to im-
ture. But the Jews, whom Jesus Christ
sed to convince, believe the prophecies,
plain application of which their obsti-
y will not allow them to acknowledge.
ey, however, most completely confirm
fact of the general expectation, which
y still entertain, contrary to all possibili-
; and they form a standing miracle to at-
t this fact, in particular, as well as the
th of Christianity in general. All those
ws who in modern times have been con-
rted, and the number, compared with that
their learned men, is not inconsiderable,
ve uniformly been convinced by the force
the prophecies, and have uniformly endea-
oured to bring their obstinate brethren to
fair discussion respecting them; justly
nceiving that to the Jews, could they be
rought to give them a just examination,
ey are calculated to bring the most irre-
agable conviction. *

* See *Chapman's Eusebius*, Vol. 1. p. 530, &c, where we have an account, from *Wolfius*, *Fabricius*, *Joseph Scaliger*, *Rich. Simon*, *Kidder*, *Bayle*, &c, of no less than 29 Jews, of talents and credit, converted in modern times to Christianity, by an accurate investigation of the prophecies; to which a hundred other instances of men of learning might have been added from Wolfius, who informs us, that the great *Esdras Edzardus* at Hamburgh was so very successful in his endeavours, as to have converted some hundreds of Jews to the Christian faith. On which account, Bishop Kidder, who often corresponded with

" Our Lord and his apostles, then, if Christianity be an imposture, were not the original framers of the deceit; and they, who did frame it, could derive no benefit from its accomplishment, having long before that æra paid the debt of nature. But none of those who contributed to raise the expectation of this event, could have any temporal motives for imposing on the credulity of their countrymen; because none of them seem to have expected, or laid any plan for, the accomplishment of it in their own day; and, therefore, none of them could expect to derive any benefit from the final completion. They seem just to have spoken as the Spirit gave them utterance; to have marked numerous particulars which posterity could not easily mistake, but to have formed no complete notion of the whole transaction. The prophets, too, were numerous, and they succeeded one another in distant ages: Malachi, the last of them, having flourished considerably more than a thousand years after Moses. It is not easy to conceive that all these men were successively combined in a scheme of delusion, especially as not one slight circumstance has trans-

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him, justly said, that " he had been an inſtrument of converting more Jews (among which are a considerable number of Rabbins,) than have perhaps ever been converted by any one person in the world since the age of miracles." *Kidder's Demonstration of Messiah*, Part. III. p. 197. Fol.

pired to give credit to such a suspicion; and since, on the contrary, it is evident that the latter did not borrow their information from their predecessors, but, on the contrary, that they gradually improved in clearness, precision, and number of circumstances: Still less can we conceive any such combination to have existed, when we reflect that the race of prophets, according to the prediction of Daniel respecting "the sealing the vision and prophecy," † ended with Malachi, 400 years before the birth of Christ; or if any such extravagant notion was ever formed, as that of introducing a new system of imposture, after the revolution of so many ages, by pretended prophecies in the interval,—the scheme was here entirely broken; and if any such attempt had been afterwards made, it must have been performed by a new set of men, unacquainted with the original plan; or it must have sunk into eternal oblivion. But such a plan never could have been formed; for no numerous set of men can be brought thus successively to act in concert, so abominable a part, without some advantage, either real or supposed; or if such a plan were possible, it never could be brought to any perfection.—It must be frustrated by a thousand circumstances which the contrivers could not foresee, and which, ages after their de-

† Dan. ix. 24.

cease, they certainly could not prevent. It must be frustrated by the passions, and detected by the partialities of numerous individuals. Their combination could never be so perfect, as to lull the suspicions, and to evade the detection, of all those they wished to delude.

" In the case before us, Malachi, the last of the prophets, after reminding his countrymen of the advantages they so peculiarly enjoyed, exposes their ingratitude and hard heartedness, by enumerating their crimes, and their innattention to the divine law vouchsafed to them. He represents the Deity as wearied with the repeated impieties of his people, and threatens them with punishment and rejection, declaring that God would " make his name great among the Gentiles;" and that the Lord whom they sought should suddenly come to his temple, preceded by the messenger of the covenant, who, like a harbinger, should prepare his way before him; that when he should appear, he would purify the sons of Levi from their unrighteousness, and refine them as metal from the dross; and that then " the offering of Judah," the spiritual sacrifice of the heart, should be pleasant to the Lord:" And, after exhorting them to repentance he concludes with a further assurance of salvation, to those who feared God's name, from the sun of righteousness, which should arise with healing in his wings, and,

by enjoining, till that period, a strict observance of their ancient law.

" In the succeeding 400 years, no person appeared in Judea, assuming the prophetic character; and the whole matter was left to the gradual operation of divine providence,—yet, during this interval, the expectation of Messiah became stronger and stronger, and seemed gradually to verge towards completion. After the subjugation of the kingdom to the power of Rome, when the sceptre was departing from Judah, and a law-giver from between his feet, Shiloh was anxiously expected as their deliverer from Roman bondage. Still worldly minded and corrupt, they misconceived the nature of the salvation which had been promised to them, and, by encreasing their prejudices, and continuing their vices, they were labouring, without their knowledge, to fulfill those prophecies which they had thus misunderstood. It may easily be perceived, that, whatever advantage such a temper of mind might afford to the exertions of ambition, it was calculated to oppose every obstacle to the calm influence of solid religion. At length the long promised Saviour appeared, and in the circumstances which had been foretold. His birth was miraculous; for, as Isaiah had predicted, he was born of a pure virgin. His mother and her betrothed husband lived in Galilee when Jesus was conceived; but as

it had been foretold that he should be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, of whose house and lineage they were, a singular coincidence occurred which obliged them to remove thither; viz. a general taxation of the Roman empire by a decree of Augustus; and, while they were there, the child was born. The accommodation of his mother was wretched, and she was obliged to lay her son in a manger. But the birth of this extraordinary person, though thus mean, was announced, not to the proud and careless rulers of the Jews, but to some humble shepherds tending their flocks in the field, by an angel; and to some Eastern Magi, by the apprarance of a new star. The shepherds came and paid their respects to the heavenly babe, whom they found, as the angel had told them, lying in a manger, meanly wrapt in swaddling clothes. The circumstances which had been communicated to them respecting the child, they made known abroad. The Magi, also, who had been acquainted with the ancient promise, following the direction of the star, came to Jerusalem, as appears, about two years after Messiah's birth, and enquired of the leaders in that city, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." This news troubled Herod and all Jerusalem with him. But neither he nor they pretended to treat it as a thing impossible, or un-

heard of: On the contrary, the king called an assembly of the chief priests and scribes, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. They recurred to the prophets, and found that he was to be born in Bethlehem of Juda. With this information, Herod having enquired when the star appeared, dismissed the Magi, requesting them, after they had found the child, to bring him word again, that he might go and worship him also. When they had left Jerusalem, the star again appeared, and stood over where the young child was. When they had fallen down and worshipped the object of their anxious search, they opened their treasures, and presented to him the richest gifts of India. The request of Herod to these men was insidious, and was disappointed by the special care of the Almighty. They departed to their own country another way, without returning to Jerusalem. Indignant at his disappointment, and conceiving that the child, of whom he had heard, was destined to bereave his family of their dignity; and unable to gain certain information about the object of his jealousy, he sent forth and slew all the children in Bethlehem, and the coasts thereof, from two years and under, according to the time which he had enquired of the Eastern sages. But the malice of the monarch was defeated by the care of heaven; the object of his vengeance having been previously

conveyed into Egypt. On the death of Herod, Joseph and Mary returned with their charge to the land of Israel; but, fearing Archelaus, his son and successor, they turned aside into Galilee, and dwelt in Nazareth: by all which circumstances several prophecies were fulfilled, as particularly noticed by St. Matthew. A short time previous to the birth of Jesus was born John the Baptist, the harbinger *foretold* by Malachi. His father Zacharias, *an* old man, was a priest of the course of Abia; his mother was of the daughters of Aaron; and both were distinguished for their correct and blameless life. Elizabeth had hitherto been barren, and was now stricken in years. While burning incense in the temple, Zacharias was informed by an angel, that she should bear him a son, whose future life should be extraordinary; who was destined to precede the Saviour of mankind; and who should become the happy instrument of turning many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. The priest did not readily believe the communication, because the thing was naturally impossible; and his unbelief was punished with dumbness, till the words of the Angel should be fulfilled. At the circumcision of the child, the father's speech was restored, and the circumstances which he then unfolded were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judia. At the circumcision of Jesus,

Simeon, an old man, just, devout, and waiting for the consolation of Israel, came into the temple, took the child in his arms, and declared that he was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which should be spoken against; that, in consequence of his misfortunes, his mother should experience the most poignant anguish; and that he was the messenger of salvation to all people. Annah, likewise, an aged widow, in the spirit of prophecy, gave thanks, on the same occasion, to the Lord; and spoke of the new-born child to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.

"Such are the circumstances, as detailed in the Gospels, which accompanied the birth of Jesus Christ. To the truth of the representation, no solid objection has ever been made. Cavils and objections have been raised respecting the several particulars, because, being uncommon, they appear at first sight to be improbable; but no argument nor testimony has been adduced by ancient infidels, or can now be found, sufficient to weaken the certainty of their having taken place. Indeed, the whole facts of the gospel-history are attested by the keenest opponents of Christianity; the existence of them they could not, and did not dare to deny; and they therefore exerted all their learning, influence, and abilities, in opposing the inferences which were

drawn from them *. Had they been able to oppose the facts, their task had been more easy, and their success greater. The inference I mean to draw from the circumstances I have now detailed, is this: It appears that Jesus Christ was announced at his very birth, and soon after, as the person destined to fulfil the ancient prophecies, and to unfold to man the final will of Heaven, respecting their conduct in this world, and their prospects in the next. Now, it is obvious, had there been any imposture in the case, that such an annunciation never would have taken place; because the persons concerned could not possibly be sure that the new-born babe would fulfil their intentions; nor, if they could so far have deluded themselves, as to form such a hope, could they expect any return from the completion of so wild a scheme; because, being already well advanced in life, they could not possibly hope to live to enjoy the fruits of their plan. But, besides the natural impossibility of such a plan of imposture being thus attempted, by men who could neither expect to reap any be-

* See *Chapman's Eusebius*, vol. 1. p. 363, &c. and Lardner's *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, where it is completely proved, that the opposition of both Jews and Pagans affords undoubted evidence of the general truth of the facts, and which, therefore, forms the strongest possible evidence for the truth of the religion.

nefit from it, nor be even certain of its being carried on, the persons concerned were by no means such as were likely to frame any such scheme, or to forward it if they had. Joseph was a man of no education, by trade a carpenter; and his character was not only without blemish, but in the highest degree respectable. Mary was equally unfit for any deep scheme of deceit, and, from the purity of her character, equally unlikely to attempt it. Simeon and Anna, both on the brink of the grave, celebrated for their piety, and waiting for the consolation of Israel, were not likely persons to enter cordially into a plan of deceiving mankind, on the very subject from which they derived their comfort in the approach of death. The situation of Zacharias and Elizabeth, with respect to age, rank, and office, seems to have placed them beyond the reach of temptation to combine with impostors, even if their characters had been less respectable than we find was the case. Zacharias was of the sacerdotal order, and his wife of the same tribe. Both of them of course were fully convinced of the divinity of their religion, and aware of the prophecies respecting Messiah. But these convictions would naturally restrain them from opposing the will of God, or deluding the minds of the people by a preconceived system of deception. But the birth of their son John, when Elizabeth,

who had hitherto been barren, was past the age of child-bearing, renders the notion of imposture in them still more improbable. It would have been a strange perversion of mind, which would have led such persons to apply so uncommon a blessing to the purposes of deception; a deception of which they could not reap the fruits; the completion of which was doubtful; and which, at all events, they could not hope to see. It would have been a still stranger coincidence,—had these children been born only for common purposes, and had their parents really formed a scheme of delusion,—that they should have been born at a period when expectation was awake for some great event; and that their births should be attended with circumstances, and followed by consequences, such as to induce a large portion of mankind to believe the prophecies, which raised that expectation, to be thereby fulfilled.—The appearance of the Eastern Magi at Jerusalem, and their enquiring for the king of the Jews, whose star they had seen in the east, and their departure, without informing Herod of the event of their enquiry, are circumstances which could not have taken place in an imposture. They were men of learning, and, by the presents they brought and presented, they appeared to be men of rank. It was impossible that persons so far removed from Judea, and in such circumstances as they appear to have been, could

have been concerned, with a few obscure Jews, in adding credit to an imposture.—Nor does it seem possible, that such men as the apostles could have contrived such a story, or that they should have known the customs of the East so intimately as they seem to have done; viz. their attention to astronomy, which discovered to them a new appearance in the heavens, and that they never came into the presence of kings without gifts. But if any such suspicion of its being framed should arise, the suspicion is completely obviated, by the public manner in which they came to Judea, and by the fatal massacre which followed their departure. Mr M., whose candour is by no means carried to excess, in judging of the transactions recorded in sacred history, confidently asserts, without the most distant attempts at enquiry, that "it seems most probable that the whole story (of the massacre of the innocents by Herod,) is the *dash* of some dramatist;" and we may, with equal confidence, and more justice, assert, that this dash of Mr M.'s pen is rather unfavourable to his credit. Such *dashing confutations* any man may make, but it is not quite so easy to support them. Perhaps this most profound philosopher, and accurate historian, never remarked the passage of Macrobius, (Saturn. lib. 2. c. 4.) in which he mentions the *jocular remark* of Augustus, when he heard of the infant massacre.—

" Cum audisset, (says this writer) jussu *Herodis* in *Syria* infra bimatum occisos, et in turba simul occisum esse *ejus filium*, mallem inquit (Augustus) *Herodis* porcus esse quam filius." This is the testimony of a Pagan; and it would by no means have been beneath our author's dignity to have noticed it, and to have reflected, at the same time, that the story, which he considers as a *dramatic dash*, was never denied by those who were best able, and equally willing as himself, to confute it, had not its certainty been beyond all question. But he asserts, at the same time, that the enquiry, whether it was or was not so, is of no consequence; and that it would only prove that Herod had " followed the example of Moses, who contrived his massacring expedition to plague Pharaoh;" a parallel equally unjust and disgraceful!—The death of the first born in each house of Egypt, being such as no individual could have contrived and executed, by natural means, in a powerful kingdom, and escape unpunished. But Herod's massacre, which our author wishes thus to pass in silence, proves, that, soon after the birth of Christ, the purpose of his future life was known or suspected; and therefore, as that purpose was actually attained, there could be no imposture.

" The only other circumstance attending our Lord's birth, or early life, on which Mr M. makes any remarks, is the miracu-

lous conception, which he treats with as little regard to decency and sober enquiry, as his master Thomas Paine had done before him. Amidst an abundance of irrelevant matter, and absurd reasoning, he endeavours to prove, that, because children are never produced but by the intercourse of a male with a female, Joseph was imposed upon by Mary and her friends; as if it were impossible for him, who at first created man, and ordained the species to be thus continued, to produce a man, if so it please him, without such intercourse. Speaking of the genealogy given by St. Matthew, he contends, that because this apostle traces our Lord's descent through Joseph, he wished him to be conceived as the lawful son of Joseph; and that, had he believed him to be the son of God, begotten by inspiration, he would not have been assiduous to prove his descent from David, nor to exalt his name in the records of Kings." Our author had probably forgot, when he wrote this, that the prophets had foretold that Jesus was to be descended of David; that though Joseph did not beget him, he was his *father-in-law*; that St Luke has given us his descent also by Mary, using Joseph's name in her stead; because, as he was her husband, he was *son-in law* to Heli her father; and that his name was probably thus used in consequence of the Jewish maxim—*Familia matris non est familia.* In a subsequent chap-

ter, speaking of these different genealogies, our intelligent infidel says, " We positively know the Jews had no other public or private record but the Bible;" which assertion is *positively* false, it being well known that they kept regular tables of all their tribes and families. To his assertions respecting St Matthew's belief, the whole tenor of St Matthew's gospel and conduct will afford, to the most inattentive reader, a complete confutation.

" The story of the miraculous conception, Mr M. gives us nearly in St Matthew's words; but he immediately after forgets what he had transcribed, and asserts that Joseph had married Mary in the full assurance of her being a chaste maid; when the Evangelist positively states that they were only betrothed, and had not yet come together. St Matthew says, and so Mr M. transcribes the passage, that " Joseph, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." But in the next page but one, he says, that " in a short time after this marriage he grew jealous. This jealousy evidently discomposed and soured his mind; for we read, *that being a just man, he was willing to make her a public example.* From this rash measure he was indeed diverted; but not by the interposing persuasions of a *real* angel, if such there be." Such scandalous misrepresentations so often occur in

this work, that no man can suppose them to be casual. From the angel's being represented as appearing in a dream, our wise author conceives the whole to be an illusion. It would be well if he could furnish us with a parallel instance of a man, avowedly of a good character, allowing himself to be so imposed on in so tender a point, and in such circumstances; or of a woman, whom he represents as an *adulterous spouse*, obtaining in the world, from friends and enemies, such respect for the opposite virtues. The characters of women are extremely tender; and when once any of the sex have publicly made a false step, they do not generally obtain much indulgence from the world. But our author, with singular penetration and candour, tries the cause legally, and asserts that, in a similar case, though the same pretences were made on the part of the woman, Lord Kenyon would *recommend the husband to sue for a divorce*, as in cases of *crim. con.* Such cases cannot be common: Such pretences were never made before, and will probably never be made again; but were it to happen, preceded by such prophecies, accompanied by such circumstances, and followed by such consequences, as in this before us, neither Lord Kenyon, nor any other wise and upright man, fully acquainted with the whole circumstances, would or could make any such recommendation as this author contends.

" Our author next proceeds to comment on the miracles; and, being unable to oppose them by argument, or to prevent the force of the inferences to be drawn from them, he damns them at once by rude assertions, and what he calls parallel stories, invented, I imagine, by himself; and he finishes his whole remarks, such as they are, on this most important part of the argument for Christianity, in a few pages. He tells us, that they are indeed few in number, and told in a careful and common-place manner; —that they have little of the character of divine power and prescience; and that historians, and even divines, are much divided about them. All this sounds well; but, unfortunately for Mr Macleod's credit, no part of it is true. He then alludes to miracles in other historians, related with equal plausibility:—I wish he had afforded us some few instances: And he gravely tells us, that Great Britain can, at this moment, produce accounts of numerous miracles, " performed within her pale, in the course of the last 20 years, on better testimony than that of *profligate and idle Jews*, as the witnesses of the wine and water miracle were;" upon which he endeavours to entertain us with the story of a ghost, which probably his nurse had told him, with which he occupies two pages, and which he considers as a proper confutation of the account of the resurrection of Lazarus. After having dismissed this ac-

count, therefore, as a trick, and an imposture, he returns to the miraculous conception, and then passes on to the crucifixion, which he compares with the poisoning of Socrates by the Athenians.—He next proceeds to the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, the arguments for which (the strongest that were ever afforded for any fact) he does not take time to consider; but he opposes the whole, by what he calls a parallel case accommodated to his own taste, and, in passing, he bestows *two sentences* of confutation on *all* the other miracles of Jesus Christ. As he proceeds he tell his right reverend opponent, that he can only expect that he should shut up that part of his Lordship's book, where the fable of the resurrection is defended; and that his astonishment is increased at every line he reads on the subject; which every body must allow, is a *most convincing* mode of argument. Then passing over what he calls the acknowledged mistake of John and Mark, respecting the hour of the crucifixion, as immaterial, he says,—" We have only to regret, that so good a man should have fallen a victim to so base a party." It would have been well if he had told us to what party our Lord fell a victim;—if he means the apostles and his other followers, it would have been worth his while (hurried, though he appears to have been, when he wrote this part of his work) to have reflected that our Lord was

he chief and director of them all, and that he fell a willing victim for the sins of men. He next proceeds to refute the account of the miraculous darkness, which, together with that of the sun standing still in the time of Joshua, he declares to be totally inconsistent with the unrevoked declaration made by God himself, after the flood: "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and *day* and night, shall not cease:"—Such quibbling nonesense is beneath contempt, and can only be equalled by what he says in another place, on the 1st verse of Genesis, respecting the assertion there made, that the earth, when first created, was without form and void; which the merest school-boy, who had read Ovid's first fable, could not misunderstand, and which, however inaccurate the translation may be esteemed, by so accurate a linguist, evidently means, that it was a rude mass, a chaos not yet reduced to order, the sea not retired to its proper bed, and the dry land not decorated with plants, nor occupied by animals. But St Mark and St Luke, our author tells us, (p. 246 and 247) mention nothing respecting the darkness the renting of the veil of the temple; and, triumphing not a little on their supposed silence, he asserts, that it could only proceed from their ignorance or disbelief of it. Let us enquire whether this statement be accurate. St. Matthew, chap. 27th, ver. 45,

has these words: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour;" and in verse 51, &c. he says, "and behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, &c. St. Mark, chap. 15th, verse 33d, has these words: "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour;" and in verse 38 are these words: "and the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;" St Luke, chap. 23d, ver. 44. 45. writes thus: "and it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." Mr M. represents himself as a sincere enquirer after truth, and assumes the character of an honest and upright man. Under this mask he comes forward as an opponent of Christianity, and under this mask he would persuade the people of this country to renounce their religion. I will leave it to you, gentlemen, nay, I will leave it to himself, to determine, whether a man, capable of making such open and avowed misrepresentations of a book in every body's hands, is worthy of any credit; or, whether he deserves not be branded as an open enemy to truth, honour and honesty. But the strongest evidence of the falsity of what he calls Matthew's

accounts, he says, is, that nothing of the kind was ever observed, nor consequently did it happen. But if any credit were due to this man's assertions, we might say, in reply, what has been often and justly argued, that silence does not imply contradiction; and that silence, in enemies, rather implies consent, or at least inability to confute what has been asserted on the other side. But there is a tradition not improbable, that Apollophanes and Dionysius the Areopagite, observed this wonderful eclipse in Egypt, and that the latter exclaimed: "*Either the Deity suffereth, or hath sympathy with that which suffereth.*" And though this report may be doubted, it is certain that Lucian Martyr, a presbyter of Antioch, challenging the Heathens on this very subject, used these words: "Requirite in annalibus vestris, invenietis, temporibus Pilati, Christo patiente, fugato sole, interruptum tenebris diem." *Euseb.* Lib. 9. *Hist. Eccles.* cap. 6. A challenge not likely to be made, if the case had not been so; for Christians had, and still have, a little more regard to character, than Mr M. seems to have. Tertullian, in the 21st chapter of his apology, makes a similar appeal to his opponents, referring likewise to their public records; and a passage is quoted by Eusebius from Phlegon, in which both the darkness and the earthquake are mentioned. With such, and numerous other appeals, directly

and openly made, and never controverted by those who were most inclined and best able, had the thing been false, to controvert it,—the fact seems placed beyond a doubt, even on the testimony of Pagans themselves. But here Dr. F. interferes, and, because Pliny has not mentioned it, or because those Pagan records in which it was mentioned, are lost, he denies it. His purpose, in mentioning this subject, he tells us, is to prevent the effect of Bishop Watson's *groundless assertions*, which he does, by *telling* his Lordship, that both he and Mr Ferguson are ignorant, both of astronomy and chronology; that the 4th year of the 202d Olympiad, mentioned by Phlegon, is not the year of the crucifixion, in any system of chronology; in which assertion, when he thinks again, he may probably find himself wrong: that a comet might have occasioned the darkness, if it did happen, and by referring to the prodigies at the death of Cæsar:—By all which, and other similar assertions, it would appear that this wonderful philosopher does not always think seriously before he determines, nor reflect, that what he blames in another, cannot be fair in himself; and that, though he might prove that no natural eclipse took place at the period of the crucifixion, he will not, by such proof, annihilate the belief of a supernatural darkness, testified by credible witnesses.

" Mr M. next proceeds to comment on St Paul's conversion; and, having mentioned Lord Lyttleton's reflections, he says, they are very elegant, but *he thinks* not very sound. Having thus ably confuted the noble Lord, he asserts, that St Paul was an enthusiast, and that he is *therefore at liberty to suppose* that he threw himself hastily on the grass, and was immediately merged in the pathos of a religious revery; and he supports what he calls his deduction, by a ridiculous story of Dr Watts. After finishing this admirable tale, he returns to St Paul, and, with one assertion following hard upon another, but without seriously attempting or encountering argument, he informs us, that as his conversion was pretended, his perseverance was the effect of prejudice; on which account it was, as he continues, that in Corinth, Paul could not convert one Jew, so conscious were they that the resurrection and ascension had been fabricated to give new *vigour to a fainting party*. This man challenges the character of a philosopher, and, as such, he conceives himself to be at liberty to confute, without enquiry and to determine without argument. Had he read from the 4th to the 9th verse of the xviii. chapter of Acts, before he finished the above sentence, he probably would not have had the confidence to let it pass, especially if, to the account there given of St Paul's successive labours among his co

trymen at Corinth, he had added the accounts of similar success at Damascus *, at Salamis † in Cyprus, at Antioch ‡ in Pisidia, at Iconium ‖, at Thessalonica §, at Berœa **, at Ephesus ††, at Miletus ‡‡, and at Rome ‖‖. But such candour was not to be expected from a man who probably never read one chapter of the Old or New Testament from beginning to end, and who, though he treats the whole as a fable, from ignorance or design, mis-states the most common and indisputable facts; and who calls that a *fainting party*, which was then increasing, with a rapidity to which history affords no parallel. The argument of Bishop Watson, respecting the truth of what is contained in St Paul's letters to the Corinthians, which he justly deduces, from the particulars never having been controverted or called in question,—he confutes, by saying, " Your conclusion is, *I think*, not apt." He then says, if we were even to admit the testimony of St Paul to the resurrection of Jesus to be " *a* TRUE *testimony*, we are not qualified to say that it is either *a* FIT *testimony*, or capable of proving, that Jesus did really rise from the dead." This wonderful sentence, with ma-

* Acts ix. 20. 22. † Ib. xiii. 5. ‡ Ib. v. 14. 14. ‖ Ib. xiv. 1. § Ib. xvii. 1. 4. ** Ib. xvii. 10. †† Ib. xviii. 19. xix. 1. 10. ‡‡ Ib. xx. 17. 21. And ‖‖ Ib. xxviii. 17. 22.

ny others equally remarkable, Mr M. will probably explain for the benefit of weak capacities, in the next edition of his book. To answer such trash, particularly, would be absurd, especially as so many able men have already fully estimated the testimony of St Paul.

" Having thus COPIOUSLY and *completely* confuted the arguments for Christianity, Mr M. thinks it necessary to comment on some of its precepts, which he thinks excellent ; and he admits (and a wonderful concession, good sirs, it is) that Jesus was the well-wisher of mankind ; but he damns the praise he here and elsewhere bestows, by adding, " That to promote his laudable reform, he may have gone a *little* out of the plain road ; and that, with such intentions, *a man might be tempted a little out of the common path.*" This Mr M. doubtless considers as excellent morality, and he seems to have made it the ground-work of his own conduct. The gospel of Christ, however, abhors, and, whatever allowance we may make for the actual failings of men, every honest man must reject such a principle. With the same strict regard to morality and just criticism, he proceeds to shew (which he attempts to do by a most absurd supposition) how Jesus came to call himself the Son of God ; and, praising his great talents, deep research, and excellent laws, he calls him the Confucius of the Jews, and com-

pares him with that Eastern philosopher. One of our Lord's sayings seems to have struck our author as a great evidence of philosophic research: "I was from the beginning of all things." By which he probably means the passage where our Lord says, *before Abraham was I am.* John viii. 58. or he may mean the first verse of that book: In the beginning was the word, &c. for, Mr M. is not over-burdened with accuracy. Of this saying, as he has given it, he remarks, that however apparently divine, it means no more, than that, as there must have been a first cause, so he could trace himself, link by link, to that cause, and of course conclude, as any other man may, "I was from the beginning," &c. *i. e.* human life and human reason *have existed from the beginning of their first creation.* How astonishingly sublime does this saying appear, when accompanied with this *new* and incomparable explanation! He next proceeds to calumniate the Bible *in toto,* and to assert, that it is the cause of all our vices and misfortunes; and he proceeds to declaim against the civil, as well as the religious polity of Europe; and it appears, from his rambling assertions, (for there is no argument) that it is the authority, which he calls *imperious*, of those institutions which chiefly galls this astonishing philosopher. Having condemned the conduct of society, and proposed remedies, he takes leave of

revelation by again abusing it, by asserting, "that the day of its eternal dissolution is approaching, when even the Church of England must acknowledge her errors;" and, with much modesty, he denominates all those, who believe the truth and force of miracles, *the slaves of sloth*. In his progress, he concludes, that the laws of nature, and even the human race, though proceeding from God, are independent of him; that God himself cannot for a moment suspend the laws of nature; and that the freedom of man renders it impossible and unnecessary for any person to be either a prophet, or performer of miracles. He next proceeds to give us an account of his own creed, which, however sublime it may appear to philosophers to be, is little calculated for general use; and again turning to the Bible, he concentrates in two or three pages, by way of farewell, as much scurrility against that book, and some characters in it, as these pages can well hold. To retail these blasphemous abuses, would be to partake of the guilt of the author; yet, if, instead of rude and impertinent assertions, these pages had contained any argument, I should have endeavoured to have met it fairly. But, to a man who rudely asserts, without adducing any certain reasons, or considering positive evidence, that the religion of Moses, (who he asserts, p. 89. could probably not write his own name) and those

called prophets, is that of tyrants and fools, nothing can, or ought to be opposed, but silence and contempt, Yet this man, who has evidently never read the Scriptures, nor the apology of the illustrious prelate whom he opposes, or he could never have fallen into such gross mistakes as we find he has done; —this man finishes, by calling on Bishop Watson to return him an answer; as if he had completely and candidly investigated the whole subject; as if no book had ever appeared in defence of Christianity, but that of this reverend prelate; and as if he had indisputably and fairly confuted all that had yet been said in its behalf. Of all the puny and restless objects which crawl along the surface of the globe, the most contemptible is an impertinent conceited sciolist.

" In the circumstances we have already detailed at some length, appeared the Saviour of mankind, in a period the most enlightened and civilized, when Rome was mistress of the globe, and had communicated a portion of her knowledge wherever her arms were extended. Though the arts of life, however, were highly cultivated, and human knowledge was in its meridian splendour, mankind were totally unacquainted with true religion, and dreadfully immersed in vice and debauchery.—Even the Jews, distinguished from all other nations by their religion and their law, had swerved greatly

from purity of conduct, and, having grossly perverted the spiritual instruction contained in their sacred books, had placed their affections entirely on earthly enjoyments, and had even construed the predictions of their prophets respecting Messiah, into the expectation of temporal aggrandizement. To this torrent of corruption and misapprehension, Jesus Christ, an apparently obscure and friendless individual, determined to oppose himself, as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel, and with means, to all human appearance, totally inadequate, he accomplished his purpose. In his outward appearance there was nothing attractive. He grew up, as Isaiah had foretold, as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he had no form nor comeliness, and, when we saw him, there was no beauty that we should desire him.—Though descended of a race of kings, his birth was mean and his life indigent. He had no natural means of acquiring knowledge, for he was bred a carpenter, and exercised his trade for subsistence, till he commenced his ministry. He had no natural means of exercising authority or commanding respect; for he was without alliance with the great, or influence with the rich and powerful. Accordingly he passed his life, as Isaiah said he should do, despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: Men hid, as it were,

their faces from him; he was despised, and they esteemed him not.

" As we proceed in the history of this divine person, we find his approach announced by the ministry of John the Baptist; but so far are we from finding the smallest trace of collusion or combination between them, that they appear to have had no private connection, and no personal acquaintance. The character of St John is extremely singular; but it is that of a man totally incapable of imposture or disguise, as his death sufficiently testifies. The first public act of our Lord's, immediately before he commenced his ministry, was the choosing his apostles; who were, if his was a scheme of imposture, of all men the least fitted to carry it on. They appear to have been men of plain good sense and regular conduct; but they had neither the dispositions, the abilities, nor the address, requisite in impostors. After choosing the twelve as his attendants, to learn his doctrines, and witness his miracles, our Lord began the exercise of his ministry; in every step of which he found obstacles to which no human power or industry was equal. Nothing is more obvious than that our situation, in thi world, is transitory and uncertain; nor can any piece of instruction be more important than that which teaches us so to pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Obvious and important, however,

as these things are, mankind have seldom been disposed seriously to attend to them; and, when left to themselves, they have never, we have seen, made any certain progress. Jesus Christ came with authority to instruct, and to command obedience; to unfold to us the nature of God, our connection with, and dependence on him; and certainly to fix those duties which result from this connection and dependence. That all had sinned, and come short of the glory of God, even the Heathens saw and acknowledged:—Of the origin and cure of this guilt, however, they knew nothing; and nothing certain could naturally be known. Jesus, the end of the law, and the object of numerous prophecies, settled the weak disputes of reason, and the erroneous deductions of men, by the clear light and absolute authority of divine Revelation. He taught that the sins of men were to be forgiven, and eternal happiness conferred on every sincere penitent, through the merits, intercession, and atonement of one Mediator:—That he himself, the son of God, was that Mediator, and had come into the world to ensure those privileges by the sacrifice of himself. He taught the Unity of the Divine Nature; and that, in that Unity, subsists Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, equally concurring in the great work of Redemption, and equally the objects of our faith and adoration. He taught the resurrection

of the body to life immortal, and a future judgment of all mankind by himself, in the glory of his Father; and thus brought life and immortality to light by his gospel, by giving full assurance and evidence of what was but faintly gathered from obscure hints or distant traditions. He improved, extended, and placed on its proper basis, the moral law; and promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit to all his sincere followers, in the discharge of their duty. He enjoined us to do to all men as we should wish them to do to us; and not only to forbear revenge, but to do good to them that hate us; to bless them that curse us; and even to pray for those who despitefully use and persecute us; and happy would the world be were these precepts universally attended to! He taught us that God is omniscient; that he sees all our actions, and knows our very thoughts; that vice consists not in the outward act only, but must be avoided even in contemplation; that the rewards of Christian obedience are unspeakable;—but that no one without obedience can attain to them.

"Well acquainted with the nature of man, which is ever prone to negligence and inattention, he appointed two simple rites, Baptism and the Eucharist, to be performed, the one at our initiation, and the other frequently in commemoration of the mercies he had procured for us; and of the sufferings by which they were procured; and for renewing and confirming those graces and virtues

which are absolutely necessary in the Christian life. For the performance of these rites, and for the general instruction of mankind in the duties of religion, he appointed an order of men to succeed him, by whom the knowledge of his gospel has been communicated ever since to all ranks of the people: an advantage which never resulted, and never could result, from the efforts of reason, or the exertions of philosophy; an advantage so distinguished, as perhaps nothing but the loss of it could make us truly estimate. How happy those parishes are which are provided with clergymen conscientiously attentive to the discharge of their duty, he must be an inattentive observer who has not remarked: and how unfortunate those are which are not so provided, the most careless must know. Of those who are ornaments to their country, in the different walks of life, few will be found who are not at the same time attentive to the duties of religion; and of those who, for their crimes, come to an untimely end, a large proportion will be found to have commenced their swervings by a non-attendance at church; by a profanation of the Lord's day, and by a neglect or contempt of the positive duties of Christianity.

"In the gospel there is no deep research, no perplexed views of speculative science; no impertinent interference with the forms of civil government. All its moral duties are laid down with plainness, and enforced

with authority; they are drawn from active life, and recommended to our imitation by plain examples. I called some time ago upon a friend, a man of extensive learning, of keen penetration, and a cool judgment, and I found him busy reading the gospel of St John. On entering into conversation, he told me, that he had been for six months employed in reading and comparing the several gospels; and, from the circumstances and connection of the whole, investigating the nature and force of the morality there unfolded; and that, from the investigation, he had acquired a degree of instruction and satisfaction which he had in vain looked for in the sublimest and most celebrated treatises of morality. "The whole," continued he, is "simple and unperplexed; so plain, that he who runs may read; and yet, so natural, proper, and consistent in the minutest circumstances, that the deepest investigation, and most accurate research, could neither adapt it more artfully to the nature and condition of man, nor connect it more intimately with the best principles of science.* I always thought the morality of the gospel excellently adapted to general practice, but I did not before certainly know that it displayed so intimate a knowledge of the human heart, and so accurate an acquaintance with the whole circumstances of

* This was particularly the opinion of the illustrious Boerhaave.

man. It is indeed plain and obvious, and such as, when made known to us, excites wonder that it did not before result from the enquiries of moralists. * Such plainness was to be expected in whatever was appointed by divine authority to direct human conduct. But the plainest rules, though the most useful, are not the most easily discovered; yet, without plainness, as well as sublimity, morality never will be generally useful. If you put the most celebrated treatises of morality, those, I mean, which, written by Christians, have derived advantage from the dissemination of the gospel, into the hands of the

* It would, I am convinced, afford a considerable degree of amusement, and it would certainly be useful, to trace all the inconsistencies of our infidel philosophers, in their objections to Christianity. Where this religion is plain and obvious, they object to it because it is so, and contend, that what is thus obvious cannot be divine. Where, on the contrary, it is mysterious and miraculous, their opposition is equally violent, because such parts appear to them unnatural and impossible. They object to its authority, as an infringement of liberty; and they calumniate it, because it does not force all men to obedience; because, allowing perfect liberty to the human will, it has not coercively induced universal holiness. The evidence of prophecy they reject, sometimes because it is obscure, and sometimes because it is plain. Sometimes they represent Christianity as an odious compound of crimes, ambition, and deceit; and, immediately after, as a dastardly system of mortification, fitted only for the weak, the ignorant, and the refuse. In short, like the wolf with the lamb in the fable, they are determined to have at it at all events.—*Qui fictis causis innocentes opprimunt.*

bulk of the people, you will find them unable even to comprehend them. On the contrary, if they who are qualified to judge, will candidly institute a comparison between such treatises, and the gospel, they will be compelled to acknowledge that the latter surpasses the former, as much in practical importance, sublimity, and natural fitness, as in plainness and authority."

" Being resident, several years ago, in a University of great celebrity, which I shall not at present name, I was induced to attend some lectures in divinity. The professor was one of the most learned, accurate, and candid divines, I had ever the happiness of being acquainted with. I shall never forget how strongly I was affected (and not I only, but a crowded audience, made up not of boys, but of men well versed in literature and science) with his remarks, on what has been denominated the internal evidence of the truth of Christianity; and I regret exceedingly, that I am not qualified to give you an abstract, not only of those remarks, but of his arguments respecting religion in general; the positive or external proofs of Christianity in particular; and respecting the nature and effects of controversy, and the qualities requisite in a controversialist. For so extensive a detail, I am neither prepared nor qualified. Respecting the internal evidence, however, as it falls in with what we are now considering,

I shall mention the outlines of his plan of enquiry, and the general conclusion. After treating, at some length, of the method of discerning real from fictitious narratives,—of drawing particular characters, in order to have them pass for real; 1*st*, of an equal; 2*dly*, of one remote in place or time; 3*dly*, of a superior; and, 4*thly*, of one more than human; and, after answering some objections from the success of epic and dramatic pieces, this amiable divine proceeded to apply his reasoning to the gospel narratives. He *first* considered the literary characters of the sacred historians; 2*dly*, the supernatural events related by them; 3*dly*, the natural incidents, manners, sentiments, and expressions, found in their histories; and, 4*thly*, the agreement between the several narrators. Having proved that it is beyond the reach of human genius, to invent any long and particular narration, so as to have the appearance of truth; and to fill up all the circumstances, so as to make them consistent; that the meanest critic can distinguish between a history and romance; that falshood can never stand alone, and can only be supported by the real facts with which it is conjoined; and that, therefore, all attempts to deceive mankind, by any long narrative of remarkable events, put together merely by the force of imagination, must be vain *;

* The jealousy with which the accounts of extraordinary facts are received in the world, has been often

and that facts are such obstinate things, that they can hardly be drawn aside, even for a short amusement, our learned professor took a general view of the gospel history and its authors; drew from it a most interesting character of our Saviour; and, combining together a variety of those na-

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exemplified in books of travels, &c.; and this jealousy, even in circumstances which seemed to preclude reasoning, and where there was little data for enquiry, has often been of the best consequences. If then it be so natural for men to receive, with caution, and to canvass with care, the narratives of their fellow-men, the truth or falsehood of which cannot materially affect them; is it to be expected that they would let that pass without examination, which contained not uninteresting facts, or a bare detail of circumstances, but a rule of life and manners, totally different from that in common use, and the belief of which must affect every part of their conduct? Still less is this to be expected, in an age when the circumstances and evidence were open to all; when there was no force but that of reason; and when, therefore, there could be no motive for belief, but that the whole was undoubtedly true. With respect to books, too, which claim an antiquity for which there is no direct evidence, it has not only not been found easy to impose them as genuine on the public, but quite the reverse; even when they contained nothing important, or that could materially affect human opinion or conduct. That men should be less scrupulous in matters of higher consequence, is contrary to nature and to fact. In short, it may generally be laid down as an incontrovertible maxim, that books,—universally received as genuine by those who have made the most accurate enquiries, and are most concerned to detect falsehood, if any such there were, and which are opposed by no solid arguments, or by the mere wantonness of scepticism,—are genuine and worthy of credit.

tural incidents, manners, sentiments and expressions, of which that history is full; he concluded with a sublimity, an elegance, and a pathos, which I shall never forget, and of which I am totally unable to give you an adequate idea. "I do not ask you, (said he,) whether you think it probable, that so sublime a character could have been drawn; such natural scenes and incidents contrived, and such interesting sentiments conceived, by persons such as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; but I ask you, Whether you have found any thing similar, or once to be named, in comparison, in all the poets, historians and philosophers, which have yet appeared in the world?" Or, whether, from your knowledge of literature, science and human nature, you think it possible that all these illustrious men combined, were equal to the production of a story so interesting and so complete, so sublime and so simple; a story which, the more it is considered, appears the more perfect; the more minutely it is canvassed, appears the more sublime; and which, as the human mind is more improved, appears the more natural. I know you will answer in the negative,—and conclude with me, that the gospel-history bears evidence to its own truth in its minutest circumstances; and exhibits, in all its parts and consequences, proofs of an intelligence superior to man;—facts which will appear the more forcible, and become

the more convincing, as mankind are more improved, more detached from the influence of violent passions, and the seduction of temporal concerns; and as they become more intimately acquainted with their own nature and final good." Yet this is the history in which Mr M. could find little else but trick, imposture and absurdity:— But his opinion, good man, is of little consequence, as his book carries, on the face of it, proofs that he never even read, much less considered, what he thus abuses. It is this religion, to which such honourable testimony has been borne by the wisest and most virtuous men in all ages, which Dr. F. asserts to be "like that of the Jews, *a corruption*, (such is the phrase!) of the mythologies of the nations they brand with the name of infidels." I have ever been of opinion, that impudence and ignorance are nearly allied; and the conduct of these two writers confirms me in that opinion. This, gentlemen, you will probably consider as a strong expression, and I must allow it is extremely plain:—But charity may be overstrained, and delicacy may be carried to an extreme:—There are certainly circumstances to which the former ought not to be extended, and in which the latter may properly be laid aside. The man whose opposition to any doctrine, or system of opinions, which have obtained a very general attention and respect, is so violent as to lead him

to oppose the whole by whatever means; to find nothing but absurdity, superstition and imposture, in what others have proved beauty, consistency and truth,—lays himself very open to the suspicion of ignorance and prejudice. He,—who is found, in order to answer his purposes, to mistate facts; to assert, as true, what has been controverted or disproved, without referring to the arguments thus opposed; who persists in conclusions and interpretations, which, on the other side, were never thought of, or uniformly disproved, and who asserts that the whole system is repugnant to science, and held in contempt by men of knowledge, when the contrary is almost universally the case,—certainly affords the strongest possible evidence of falsehood, impudence and disingenuity. The abettors of atheism, or of the Doctor's favourite concatenation, have been few in number, and contemptible in character; and when the infidel philosophers of other classes are arrayed with them, and put in the balance opposite to the learned defenders of Christianity, even though the renowned Dr. F. and the no less distinguished Mr M. be added to the number, the suffrage of learning and science will be found completely on the side of Christianity; and the infidel scale, by the rapidity of its rise, may be in some danger of dashing their honours, without warning, on the ground; and may probably teach them

the practical truth of the proverb, " that pride goes before a fall." A celebrated poet has told us, " that a little learning is a dangerous thing;" and a more illustrious character than Pope has said, that it " is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial taste of philosophy, may perchance incline the mind of men to atheism, but a full draught thereof brings the mind back again to religion *. I remember well, when at college, that several of my young companions, elated by their little attainments and smatterings of philosophy, talked in a stile, judged with a rapidity, and dictated with a boldness, on the most important subjects, of which Sir Isaac Newton would have been afraid and ashamed; and of which they themselves, by the serious reflection of maturer years, and the acquisition of more solid knowledge, saw the folly, and now deprecate the effects. I strongly suspect, that even my friend Dr Francis, notwithstanding his wonderful pretences, is but a mere smatterer in science; that he is a young man, possessed of some quickness of apprehension; but that, fascinated by the adulation or foolish admiration of his equals, he has allowed this quickness to usurp the seat of judgement, and to occupy the space he should have allotted to more solid acquirements.

* Bacon's Advancement of Learning.

" I know not a more interesting object, than a man of learning and genius, who has spent his life in literary acquirements and scientific investigations,—humbling himself to the offices of religion, and deriving his chief consolation from the prospect of eternity, and communication with his God. His comprehensive soul grasps, as far as humanity can go, universal nature, and rises with a majestic superiority over common minds. But how vastly is his dignity and real enjoyment increased, when, withdrawing his mind from the contemplation of nature, he raises it to God, and approaches the omnipotent author of all! How are his ideas extended, and his admiration increased, when he reflects that, in addition to his power over this lower world, the Almighty has been pleased to make him an heir of immortality, and the adopted son of his redeeming love! I never was so forcibly struck with these grand ideas, or heard them more sublimely enforced, than I did a few weeks ago, in the introductory lecture of a Professor of this University, who, after a five years retirement, had again resumed the exercise of his duty. The deep research and philosophical acumen of this gentleman, are well known; and his testimony in favour of religion, deduced from philosophical principles, and supported by accurate reasoning; his beautiful allusions, and pathetic inferences,—will endear him to all who are sin-

cere lovers of virtue and order, and anxious promoters of the best interests of man. I heard that lecture just about the time I fell in with Dr F's book, and, by comparing, as was natural, the dignified reasoning of the professor, the strength and solidity of his arguments, the greatness of his mind, and the extent of his researches, with the base scurrility and empty professions of this pseudo philosopher, I confess my opinion of this champion of atheism was not heightened. When I compared the reasoning of the former, respecting a future state, the nature of intellectual pleasures here, the improvement of the human mind, and the enjoyment of the Creator hereafter, supported by the principles of philosophy, and the doctrines of scripture,—with the jargon of concatenation, of sensual enjoyment while we live, and annihilation when we die; whilst I admired the former, I could not help despising the latter, who, with bare assertions, and under the semblance of science, would deprive man of those hopes and principles, without which he would be inferior to the brute-creation; because he would want what they possess,—enjoyment adapted to his nature.

" To every candid man, capable of judging of the subject, and who will give himself the trouble to enquire into it, it must appear unquestionable, that such a system of doctrine, and rule of conduct, as we find in the gospel, could not proceed from the

natural abilities or acquirements of Jesus, as a man; or of any of his followers and adherents. Our opponents say there is nothing new in the gospel: Were they, however, to read it attentively, they would find the contrary; and that, however familiar education may have made its grand outlines to us, they were totally unknown, or unattended to, till the time of Jesus. As we proceed in our view of the external circumstances which accompanied the propagation of the gospel, we find the apostles constantly mistaking its tendency, and, like the Jews, expecting that their master was to assume regal pomp. They witnessed his miraculous power, and acknowledged his prophetic character; but to the last they retained their temporal prejudices, and national ambition. These were objects, however, the gratification of which was beneath the dignity of the Saviour of the world. Earthly dominion he scorned; earthly greatness, earthly enjoyments, and all the tribes of sensual appetites, he proved to be comparatively beneath the character of man; because, in the natural course of things, they are no sooner attained, than we are obliged to leave them for a far different scene, to the comforts of which they are by no means calculated to contribute. He did not teach us, as Dr Francis falsely states, to neglect reason, or to fly from pleasure; but he taught us to restrain all our faculties and

all our propensities, within their natural bounds; he taught us, what is of more importance than knowledge, and of more lasting satisfaction than pleasure, the nature of virtue, and the surest means of attaining happiness. Yet, however important, and however excellent, these principles may be, they are not such as seem naturally calculated to attract general attention, or to enforce the obedience of careless men. Our Saviour, therefore, might have continued to unfold his doctrines and recommend his duties, without the success which their importance demands, had he not attracted the notice of mankind, by a power superior to argument; had he not shewn, that those doctrines and duties were not only credible and proper, but divine. This he did do, by shewing that he was possessed of power superior to man; that he was perfectly acquainted with the human heart, and the conduct of Providence in human affairs. These displays of power and intelligence were made openly, without connivance, and were attended with such consequences as he avowedly proposed by them, and which his keenest opponents could not prevent. That the effect of these displays, or the natural consequence to be drawn from them, was keenly resisted by those to whom they were afforded, is certain; and that this should be the case, was naturally to be expected.—Yet the reality of them has never been controverted, by a

single argument of force, from that day to this. If the whole was a combination of imposture and delusion, some strong traces of it must have been discovered by those who so keenly opposed the whole, and some of those concerned in it must naturally have been expected by some part of their conduct to betray themselves. Yet this is by no means the case. When the doctrines and miracles of Jesus attracted peculiarly the notice of the Jewish rulers; and when they were determined to get rid of him, by putting him to death, one of the twelve, who had been constantly with him, betrayed him; another denied, and the rest fled from him, and he actually suffered an ignominious death. What was the consequence of all this?—Did any of these, or of his other numerous followers, divulge any secret plan of delusion, which had been practised by their master? No:—Yet this must have been the case, had any such delusion been practised: They owed such honesty, if not to their country and their own characters, at least, to their own safety. Yet Judas, though certainly disposed to go any lengths against his master, had nothing to divulge; and, no sooner had he received the reward of his treachery, than, struck with remorse, he acknowledged his crime, and laid violent hands on himself.—Yet, if Jesus had been an impostor, a better witness of it could not have been formed, and his conduct could have

been praise-worthy in bringing him to justice. His conduct, therefore, so opposite to what, in such circumstances, it must have been, affords the strongest proof of the innocence of his master, and the truth of his pretensions: Nor, in the general defection of our Lord's adherents, could one man or woman be found to support the charges of the Jewish rulers. Their Master's misfortunes excited fears for their own safety; but though the rulers would have received their witness gladly, they had nothing to say against him. Peter's denial of Jesus, upon this occasion, has been adduced to invalidate his future testimony, and our opponents conceive that, on this account, no credit is due to him. Had he considered the nature of the case with more attention, his conclusion would have been very different. Peter denied his master from fear for his own personal safety; and in doing so he did wrong. —But when this same Peter came coolly to consider what he had done, he did not persist in this denial; as, if his Master had been an impostor, he might, and naturally would, have done: It certainly would have been both his duty and his interest to have exposed him; but he repented most bitterly his own apostacy, and, in spite of opposition, persecution, and the fear of tortures and death, asserted that he was the Messiah: Stronger evidence of sincerity, or a more credible testimony of Jesus's Divinity could not be giv-

en, as the man evidently shewed himself, by his temporary apostacy, unfit to carry on an imposture. If a case were to happen, in our courts of justice, of a person put on his trial for an enormous crime, and if that person should happen to be such a favourite of the mob, that they had threatened, and seemed inclined to execute vengeance against any who bore evidence against him; and if a witness, struck with his own danger, should prevaricate or conceal what he knew, he would act very wrong; but if, on reflection, he should see the enormity of such prevarication or concealment, and come forward with his evidence in defiance of the threats of the people, and to the great risk of his life, all the world would be inclined to give the highest credit to this last evidence; and, though they might despise or lament the former weakness of the man, they must applaud his present conduct: Or, if the case were that of an innocent man; and if the same violent opposition were made to his defence, no man would hesitate to give the fullest credit to the last statement; because no man could doubt but that the first was the effect of fear, and the latter of the firmest adherence to truth.

" The conduct of all the other apostles and followers of our Lord, on his arraignment and death, was that of men totally unqualified for any scheme of delusion; and had our Lord been an impostor, we should

never have heard any thing more either of him and his doctrines, but that they had been justly suppressed by the civil power; and we should have found many of his friends, and all his enemies, confirming the propriety of the judgment, and the justice of his fall. The whole was done publicly; and the Jews, who shewed every disposition to suppress it, had ample means, if there was any falsehood in the case, to detect and ruin it for ever. They particularly knew that our Saviour said he should rise again; and they took the best possible means of detecting any scheme of delusion in this instance, if any such there had been. The apostles and followers of our Lord were thunderstruck by his death; and, though they could not deny or disbelieve his wondrous works, as they had expected him to become the temporal deliverer of their country; and, as they saw those hopes frustrated, they were at a loss what to think of him. If it could be supposed that a man, such as our Saviour, in whose character no flaw was ever found by his keenest opponent, could carry deceit to the grave, the circumstances were such that it must have rested there for ever. Yet we find these same panick-struck apostles, these same ignorant illiterate men, even Thomas, who was as sceptical as scepticism itself, asserting, soon after, that their master had risen from the dead; openly proving, before the

people, and preaching before his murderers, that he was the Messiah so long expected. Had the case not been so as they represented it, the confutation of it would have been most easy. If persons in their circumstances could have been conceived to be so mad as to forget their well-grounded fears, and again engage in a fruitless imposture, the suppression of their scheme, and the ruin of themselves, must have been instantaneous. Numbers of their former friends and fellow-disciples must have exposed the glaring cheat; and not one person in his senses would have been convinced by their assertions; because the means of confutation must have been as clear as noon-day. Still less could such conversions have been expected, when we reflect, that, by joining the apostles, nothing was to be gained but contempt and persecution. Yet among the Jews, who had every means of detection in their power, the converts were numerous; and among these were several of rank and learning. Among the Gentiles the apostles were still more successful. They appear no longer as fearful prejudiced Jews, but preach with boldness the truths committed to them, in every corner; and, though naturally ignorant and unlearned, they speak the language of every country they come to, as if natives. All this, when combined with their former character, and unheard of success, is totally inexplicable, upon any

possible principle, but that of the truth of what they taught, and the more than human power with which they gave evidence of that truth. Among the Gentile converts are persons of high rank and learning, whose conversion must have been the consequence of the most accurate enquiry, and the firmest conviction. Amongst these we find Sergius, president of Cyprus, Acts xiii. 12. Dionysius the Areopagite, ibid, xvii. 34. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, who suffered martyrdom, A. D. 179; Justin, who wrote a defence of Christianity, A. D. 142; Irenæus, who flourished in the year 183; Athenagoras, who was an Athenian philosopher, and wrote a book in its defence in the year 180*; Origen, Tertullian, and Clemens Alexandrinus, who all flourished in the succeeding century. It appears, then, certain and incontrovertible, that such a person as Jesus Christ had been long expected, and was particularly so at the time he was born. It appears, also, that he was announced as the promised Messiah at his birth; and that though he foretold that he should suffer death, he also prophecied the extended progress of his doctrines: That, contrary to all human expectation, to all probability, and in opposition to every obstacle, these doctrines were extended over the civilized

* See an interesting account of this man's testimony in *Addison's Evidences.*

world: That the apostate Jews, as he foretold, were punished for their obstinacy, by the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of its inhabitants: That so clear was this prophecy, and so well known, that not a Christian was found within that city, at the time of this destruction:* That the general facts, recorded by the apostles, were never controverted, either by Jews or Pagans,† though the greater part of the former, and many of the latter, have keenly opposed Christianity, by every means in their power. It must therefore be evident, to every unprejudiced man, that 'nothing but divine power could have combined such circumstances, or have produced, from such a source, consequences so important. I cannot, as I intended, enter into a particular detail of these circumstances, because I have already too long trespassed upon your patience. But I will seriously request you to consider, with candour and attention, according to the method I have pointed out, the whole subject; and, if you do so, I can have no doubt of your conclusion. You will find, on such an enquiry, that what in St Paul's time Mr M. calls a *fainting party*, obtained almost universal belief: That the influence of the gospel on the morals of man-

* See St Luke, chap. 21. ver. 20. 21. &c.

† Celsus, Julian, and Porphyry, could not deny but that some miracles were performed; and the Jews openly confess it in the Talmud Abuda Zara.

kind was most salutary: That the virtues of the first ages of Christianity were such as no persecution, not even unto death, could destroy or intimidate: That no set of men, since the world began, ever suffered more, (though their sufferings Dr F. and Mr M. carefully avoid, in their enumeration of crimes and persecutions, to mention,) or underwent their sufferings with greater dignity. You will find, as you come lower down, that when Christianity was established, though its spirit became, as was natural, less fervent, its influence continued to be excellent; and that, from the highest to the lowest of the people, those enormous instances of guilt, which previously appeared under the Pagan Emperors of Rome, are never to be met with. You will find, further, that the decay and corruption of Christianity was brought on by the irruption of the Goths and Vandals, and was continued by the ignorance which their success naturally induced. On an accurate enquiry, you will also find, that even the most corrupt systems of Christianity, and the most unfortunate æras of the church, will bear a comparison with the best times of any other system of religion whatever; and that its influence on man and human affairs, in its very worst circumstances, has been comparatively beneficial. When you reflect seriously upon all these things, and that in every age it has undergone the most serious investiga-

tion; and that, from such investigation, its truth has been the more confirmed; that, instead of being the belief of fools and knaves, it has been believed and defended by the wisest and best men, since its first appearance to the present time; that while science has enabled us to dispel the wild superstitions of antiquity, and the weak belief of ghosts and hobgoblins, it has tended to confirm the most enlightened men in the belief of the wonderful works of the Saviour of mankind; and that the names and works of Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Locke, M'Laurin, Cudworth, Clarke, Berkeley, Lyttleton, West, Addison, Nelson, Jones, Paschal, Grotius, Boerhaave, Haller, Bonnet, and numberless others, will stand against an host of pseudo-philosophers and empty dabblers in science.—When, I say, you consider all these things with attention, and, that modesty is the highest ornament, even of learning itself, you will not be disposed to give much credit to the railing of Dr. F. and Mr M.; or to think Bishop Watson under any obligation to return an answer to their empty boasts and wanton scurrilities. Christianity would have suffered nothing, with candid men, if the venerable Prelate's defence had been as weak as it is able and convincing; because it has already undergone the most serious enquiry, and its truth has long ago been fully established.

" It is therefore a piece of affectation truly rediculous, and which can only exist in minds of little compass and information; it is paying a sorry tribute to the intelligence of mankind, to suppose that we should resign the faith of our fathers, thus indisputably proved, and thus ably defended, at the scurrilous watch-word of a few obscure individuals, with nothing to recommend them but boldness of assertion, and empty professions of superior knowledge. I should consider him as a miserable casuist, who could not defend any argument, however untenable, or oppose any system, however excellent, by sophistry of a more palatable, and apparently of a more probable nature, than our two authors have done :—But matter of fact, I have already said, will confute a thousand sophisms. And now, to conclude :—I have reason, gentlemen, to return you my most hearty thanks for the attention you have generally paid to these remarks; and I have great cause to regret that they have not been more worthy of the subject, and of you. You will recollect, however, that my preparation was short; that my other avocations are numerous, and that, from these circumstances, I have felt myself obliged to derange my plan by the admission of matter for which I had not provided, and sometimes by repeating what I had before hinted at, with additional circumstances; or because, at the

time, I thought the nature of my argument required it. I may probably have committed other errors of which I am not aware; but I trust you will let them pass under your review with candour, at least, if not perfect forgiveness; as you must be convinced, that I had neither motives nor inclination to mislead you; and when you consider, that the only purpose I had in view, was to draw your attention, not to a complete and perfect defence of revelation in all its parts, by my own labour, but to a sincere and candid investigation of the whole by yourselves:—That the subject is important, all men must allow;—and he, who is disposed to pay it that attention which it merits; and who knows, as all men must know, how seriously it has been investigated, in all its parts, by the ablest men, and with what success, especially since the Reformation,—will not be inclined to rest his judgement entirely either one way or the other, on the casual labours of one or two."

I, as Secretary to the Society, and editor of this work, have only further to add, that the above speech, which, with the former one, is entitled a debate, in compliance with the forms of our club, occupied the society for three successive meetings, as suggested by one of the members, though, for the sake of connection, I have not so divided it.—When the whole was finished, the society

unanimously voted their thanks to Mr Christian for his trouble.—Many were highly gratified; though, that this was the case with the whole, I have no reason to suppose. I have, however, had no opportunity, having been absent on business since that time, to discover the real sentiments of those who took the part of infidelity. The change in Mr Goodwill's manner, which was remarked at the end of what I have called the second debate, was still more obvious in the subsequent stages:—But, the first intimation I received of his real sentiments, was from the following letters, which were accompanied with a short note from Mr Christian, who, knowing my intention of making the whole public, allowed me to make use of them, if I thought proper.

APPENDIX.

LETTER,

FROM MR GOODWILL TO MR CHRISTIAN.

Parcus Deorum cultor et infrequens,
Insanientis dum sapientiæ
Consultus erro; nunc retrorsum
Vela dare, atque iterare cursus
Cogor relictos. HOR.

SIR,

You will doubtless be surprised to find yourself addressed, at this time and in this manner, by one, of whom, on account of his conduct at the Society (in which, half a year ago, you appeared as the Advocate of Revelation,) and on other occasions, with which you must be well aquainted, you can entertain no good opinion. This consideration has made so deep an impression on my mind, that, though anxious, after much reflection, to lay my former conduct and present turn of thought candidly before you, and humbly to request your advice and assistance in chalking out, and confirming me in, a mode of life more worthy of a rational and moral being, I have been hitherto restrained, lest you should spurn from you the contemptible being who so audaciously railed against what he did not understand, and what you justly esteem so sacred. I will not

indeed assert but that the fear of ridicule has also had some little effect upon me. Led, by the force of your arguments, the influence of your example, and the dignified fervor of your manner, to think with some degree of coolness and consistency on religion, in general, and my own life in particular, I very soon began to tremble at the consequences of a conduct in every respect so unjustifiable as mine now appears to have been. Urged by these reflections, which, as I could not restrain them, became very uneasy to me, I have at length got over the false shame which has so long kept me silent; and I trust I am prepared to meet the sneer of my former companions, at least with indifference. I have brought myself also to hope that your indignation will subside into pity, when I have related the leading features of my wretched life; and that you will charitably contribute to bring to perfection what your reasoning has already excited,—an ardent desire of instruction and amendment, and of averting, as far as possible, the consequences of my folly.

I believe I may ascribe the origin of my crimes and of my misfortunes to the early death of my mother. Deprived of her fostering care, I was left almost entirely to the freedom of my own will. My father, who was a man of pleasure, paid little regard to my education, and none to my morals or religion. The only instruction I had, on either of these subjects, was from the occasional admonition of an old maiden lady, my mother's aunt. These slight impressions were therefore very soon obliterated. Possessed of a genius naturally quick, and of

spirits uncommonly high, (dangerous qualities if unrestrained) I very soon despised the common trammels of the school, and the common drudgery of education. At College I received the unlimited adulation of every boy who wished to imitate the conduct for which I was distinguished; and their ill bestowed praise unfortunately contributed to increase my natural petulance, and impatience of controul. A lad of spirit, as I was always denominated, sticks at nothing; and accordingly I soon became so bold, as confidently to declaim against every thing which I conceived had any tendency to restrain the progress of my genius, or the bent of my inclinations. I ridiculed the Bible, which I had never read, and of which I was certainly no competent judge, as a collection of old wives fables: I treated every species of religion as the effect of hypocrisy, enthusiasm, or superstition; and I considered every exertion of authority as tyranical and unjust. In our societies (for we had what we called literary societies) the professors afforded a never failing source of amusement and ridicule to us. We complained of their rigour, which, God knows, when I now reflect on it, was not great, and certainly not equal to what it should have been: We even ventured to sit in judgment on their abilities, and to pronounce them ignorant, and their notions contracted, because they sometimes urged us to greater progress in science than we thought proper; and because they prohibited us from amusing ourselves with novels in the class. In short, Sir, during the three years that I continued at the University, my

scientific improvements were almost totally obscured by my progress in dissipation. I became regardless of all authority, civil and religious, which I considered as mere modifications of tyranny and arbitrary power, and I was not very attentive to common decency.

At length, the long wished for period arrived, which forever freed me from a place which I thought totally unfit for a gentleman; and I eagerly posted off to Edinburgh, to what I called the enjoyment of life. I was now eighteen, and with avidity cultivated the society of those who were of dispositions similar to my own. I soon found, in this metropolis, many who were much farther advanced in what I considered as true learning and elegant enjoyment than I could pretend to be; and though I had disdained the authority of professors and masters, I enlisted under their direction with alacrity, and hoped one day to equal, if not to surpass them. My father had been dead three years; but the old lady, who had occasionally instructed me in my earlier youth, was still alive, and still anxious for my honour and improvement. She had influence enough to persuade me, or at least my tutors, that I ought to study law; and I accordingly entered for that purpose: but I was too fond of company and dissipation, to attend to it with any degree of assiduity or success. My companions were chosen from among the young men of the law, the students of physic in the University, and from men of no profession at all; and, by a strange fatality, I was

led, almost imperceptibly, and without an effort, into the most dissolute society in the whole town.

To be particular respecting my conduct from that time to this, would be a superfluous task, alike unpleasant to me and tedious to you. I must however say, that, though extremely dissipated, and dissipated from a kind of principle, in which I was confirmed by the influence of example, ridicule and thoughtlesness, feelings sometimes arose in my mind, which, properly directed, might have led to a conduct less unworthy. I was possessed of sincerity, and I did not entirely want benevolence. Of religion I knew little; and the ridicule of my companions, and my own vices, now strengthened by habit, allowed me neither leisure nor inclination to improve that knowledge. I thus passed the period of three years in a way neither innocent nor honourable; when I took possession of the estate which, by my father's death six years before, had devolved on me, considerably encumbered, and even lessened by his extravagance. To my tutors, who were creatures of his, I feel myself little indebted. They cleared off, during my minority, a few incumbrances; but they afforded me more money than I knew how to use, and allowed me in most cases to do as I pleased.

About this period (1793) the parties in the country run high, and the cry for liberty was loud and incessant. I and my thoughtleſs companions joined in the cry; and, what is very remarkable, except one who was obliged to leave the country, though very keen, we had prudence enough to keep with-

in ſuch bounds as that the law could not affect us. In the winter of 1793-4 we formed what we called a *philoſophical ſociety*, in which we declaimed most violently againſt tyranny and arbitrary power, and rang various changes on deſpotism, and liberty, perſecution and patriotism. Amongſt my companions at this time were ſeveral ſtudents of very conſiderable abilities, ſome foreigners, and others natives of the Britiſh Empire. As they were poſſeſſed of more learning, more ſpecious manners, and more external decency, than I had been for ſome time accuſtomed to, the variety was pleaſing; my attachment to them became ſtrong, and I conceived myſelf in the high way of improvement and happineſs.

They repreſented the preſent age as the moſt enlightened period of ſociety: They aſſerted that philoſophy, which is the cultivation of reaſon, had now riſen to a height unknown to former ages: That its progreſs had indeed been gradual; but that at preſent it was making ſtrides to perfection uncommonly rapid; and that, when it ſhould arrive at perfection, which it muſt evidently ſoon do, happineſs and philanthropy would univerſally prevail. The great obſtacles to the final completion of this happy progreſs, they contended, were the vile eſtabliſhments of Europe both civil and religious, which they therefore declared muſt be deſtroyed. They alſo aſſerted, that every true philoſopher and patriot was contributing, and ought to contribute, as much as poſſible, to their deſtruction: That prudence required them to perform this taſk with as much cir-

cumspection as poſſible: That however, as the change they wiſhed and expected to bring about, was evidently important, just and necessary, every means ought to be used to forward it: That they who would not ſubmit to be enlightened, should be compelled; and that it was entirely a question of prudence at what time and in what manner this force should be applied. One thing, they said, was certain; that it was the business of all true philosophers to sieze the first favourable opportunity of imitating the glorious example held forth to an admiring world by those illustrious philosophers, patriots and philanthropists,—the French. These, in substance, were the principles of my new associates, which they variously modified, combined and explained, at various times, interspersing the whole with abundant ridicule of the civil polity and religious establishments of this kingdom, of the constituted authorities, and even of the common distinctions of society. They declaimed frequently on the antiquated and absurd nature of our laws; and particularly condemned the mode of our education, as totally unfit for the genius and enlightened nature of the times. I have accordingly heard them ridicule and condemn the most celebrated professors of our very celebrated university, and the words *privileged fools*, and *academic tyrants*, were often in their mouths. This reasoning and these declamations pleased me extremely; and, as they flattered my vanity, I railed with the best of them, contending, with much eagerness, for the right of private judgement, against the usurpations of establishments, and quot-

ing, often with an air of learned importance, the celebrated verse of Horace,

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,

which was the motto of our society.

Such was the society I generally attended; and such, in short, without lessening my former dissipation, the principles I generally followed. Nor was the reformation of my private character thought in the smallest degree requisite by my new associates. For though they were specious men, self-conceited beyond what I am able to describe, and though they often talked of virtue in lofty terms, they were very favourable to those of their society who happened to be vicious; and indeed there was no vice in which they themselves could not occasionally indulge; and if they thought any palliation or excuse necessary, it was easy to say, as they often did, that the virtues of philosophers are very different in their nature, and therefore to be very differently estimated, from those of the idolatrous Christians. Having thus become the willing dupe of these artful men, I at length began to sport my new philosophical acquirements in every company where I thought my influence would make them pass without objection; and they were heartily pleased to see my endeavours to disseminate their opinions. My first effort generally was, by talking of the necessity and happy consequences of a reform, of equal laws, and an equal distribution of justice, to conciliate the affections of of my hearers. To prevent or disarm opposition, I made use of a variety of abstract terms, uncommon allusions, and bold assertions, by which means I ge-

nerally terrified my opponents with the idea of my superior knowledge. Having acquired, or thought that I had acquired, their confidence and respect, I ventured artfully to declaim on the absurdities of religion; and to ridicule the grimaces, hypocrisy, and useless expence of an ignorant, idle, and luxurious Clergy, with a variety of other matters, which I need not now particularly enumerate. My endeavours, in that part of the country where the greater part of my property lies, were, I lament to add, but too successful. Several of my farmers have so far followed my ideas, and those of my oracle, Thomas Paine, that, for a considerable time back, they have entirely neglected church, and even prevented their children from being baptized, wishing them, as they say, to be educated free from prejudice, and, particularly, to be kept ignorant of the Christian superstition. A large portion of people, in some adjoining manufacturing towns and villages, likewise perverted by my means, or with my knowledge, have absolutely burnt their Bibles, and have become complete Levellers and Atheists. I need not add, and I wish I had not occasion to deplore, that with their infidelity and their levelling, they have become idle, vicious, and insolent. The consequences I now most bitterly lament; and I firmly believe, from what I have seen, and have had but too much concern with, that of all the pests of civilized society, of all the artful opponents of human virtue and happiness, infidels and levellers are the most destructive and alarming. These men are assiduous, they are indefatigable, and they appear in a thousand dif-

ferent shapes, in order with the more certainty to succeed; and where they meet with a number of men half virtuous, half vicious, half learned, half ignorant, their efforts take effect with a rapidity of which they who have not had occasion to see it, can have no conception.

One of their most successful and fatal engines of of seduction, is the institution of what is called *Reading Societies*, which are now numerous in various parts of the country. The plan is specious, because the avowed object of it is improvement in knowledge and virtue; and it might be useful, were it under proper management. But as unenlightened men, the bulk of whose time must be employed in manual labour, can be no proper judges of what should form the subject of their enquiries, they must be extremely liable to error, and to become the dupes of artful men. Accordingly, into most of those with which I am acquainted, such men, if they had not a hand in establishing them, have afterwards found means to insinuate themselves; and, in general, by contending that a liberal mind must beware of established prejudices, and willing to hear both sides of every question, they cruelly bereave the poor ignorant members of their religion, their loyalty, and their comfort, whilst they are buoying them up with the idea that they are improving in knowledge, liberality, and happiness.

From this account, Sir, you will perceive, that, though a very young man, I have been a most destructive member of society. But I earnestly request you not to spurn me on that account from you,

as totally unworthy of your countenance and advice. Indeed I have therefore the more occasion for both. My crimes have been the result of circumstances peculiar and unfortunate; and though I by no means make this remark in order to palliate their enormity, I hope you will hence be the more readily induced to lend me your assistance in reforming my own conduct, and, as far as possible, that of others, who owe their corruption to my unfortunate activity. The general cause of all my follies, I judge to be want of religion, self-conceit, and impatience of restraint. When obliged, in my early years, by the authority of my old aunt, to go to church, I went there only because compelled; and though, by her means, I received some instruction in the principles of Christianity, I easily disburdened myself of the incumbrance, when removed from her inspection, in which I was but too fatally encouraged by those who ought to have known better, and to have acted more honourably by me. Though, therefore, I have declaimed with confidence, as you have heard, against religion, I was totally unacquainted with its principles or proofs, till I heard your speeches in our society; and I can truly assert, that few of my deluded companions, who dignify themselves with the appellation of philosophers, are much better instructed on this head than myself. When you first heard me speak on this subject, I had not read, as far as I recollect, a single chapter of the Bible, from the time I was at school; and in our private meetings, I have heard the same confession made by those whom I acknowledged as my guides. If we ever

read any defence of religion, it was only for the purpose of turning it into ridicule; and thus, in particular, the *Apology* of Bishop Watson was treated with the most wanton disrespect, and the most acrimonious contempt; for which his Lordship's character came in for no small portion. Your speeches, which were provoked by my folly, to which, however, I was urged by others, exhibited the subject of religion in a light in which I had never been accustomed to view it; and exposed my own conduct in a way which, as I could not confute it, occasioned, for some time, most irksome feelings. The whole made a very strong impression upon my mind,—an impression, which, I trust, shall never be obliterated. It rests however with you, to complete the good work which you have thus happily begun.

I need not tell you that my affairs are in confusion; for, being the only man of fortune in our club, I became of course a bird of prey to all the other members. This, however, is a circumstance, which, in my present situation, I consider as of inferior note. I trust they are not yet so far gone or so much confused, but that they may by economy be retrieved:—But, without the advice and help of another, I cannot be absolutely certain that I have fortitude enough entirely to throw off my former vices and acquaintances, and finally, to return to a more worthy mode of life. I fondly hope, therefore, that, as from you I learned my danger, to you I may yet owe my final reformation; and that, though you must detest my conduct, your charity will yet induce you to save me from its most awful

consequences.—In this hope, I remain, sir, your most obliged and most humble servant.

FRANCIS GOODWILL.

EDINBURGH, 29th May 1797.

MR CHRISTIAN'S ANSWER.

Cernenda autem diligenter, ne fallant ea nos vitia, quæ virtutem, videntur imitari. CICERO.

Sæpe latet vitium proximitate boni. OVID.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I was at first a good deal astonished, and perhaps indignant, at your conduct and petulance in our society, my indignation soon gave way to compassion for your unfortunate delusion. Having seen many young men in your situation, seduced at first by a negligent or erroneous education, and afterwards confirmed in the corruptions they had thus acquired by artful and designing men, I guessed your circumstances before I had certain information of them, and was at first disposed to throw myself in your way, and, if possible, to prevent you from absolute ruin. On enquiry, however, and on further reflection, I determined to leave you to yourself; because I thought, if what I said publicly, had no effect, private admonitions would only expose me to the further insolence and ridicule of your associates, and perhaps to ill-usage from yourself. I need not therefore tell you, that your letter of the 29th instant, which I received yesterday, on

the whole, gave me pleasure. I say, on the whole, for, though I am by no means disposed to upbraid, I am equally unwilling and unable to extenuate or excuse the enormity of your conduct. I feel a degree of satisfaction, however, which I cannot easily describe, in having been the means of exciting your present dispositions; and, though I will not flatter myself that I am qualified to undertake a task so important, nothing on my part shall be wanting to improve those dispositions into settled principles of virtue and religion. But I must inform you, that the most irksome part of the task must be performed by yourself, and that the chief difficulties must be surmounted by your own energy. The most unfortunate and deplorable circumstance in your case, is, the perversion of so many ignorant persons, whom, it is to be feared, the most assiduous exertions will never restore to their former principles and comfort. It is easy to seduce and pervert a body of ignorant men; but slow, painful and doubtful, in their issue, are the means by which they are to be recovered. Vice makes its first advances by stealth; and, in its first stages, appears under the semblance of virtue. Its nature and its consequences are artfully concealed, even from the mind on which it operates, till, by the influence of the passions, and the power of habit, it takes effectual root. Then the mask is generally thrown off; it appears in its native colours, and avowedly pursues its course, without attending to circumstances or consequences. What before would have alarmed or disgusted, becomes pleasant or necessary:—Even

the desire of concealment is laid aside, and the unhappy victim, having gradually risen from one step to another, at length reaches the summit of infamy, *and glories in his shame.* From such a state few have fortitude enough to retreat. I hope, my dear sir, you will find yourself to be an exception; but my fears for those you have unfortunately contributed to seduce, scarce allow me this hope.

Nothing appears to me to afford a greater instance of the corruption of our nature; nothing certainly contributes more to promote that corruption,—than this circumstance; viz. that the best things are often apt to be perverted to the worst purposes, and that the most malignant vices, or the sources from whence they spring, often appear, and gain credit, under the specious garb of virtue. There are many vices of a most destructive nature, and many modes of seduction equally dangerous, which it is not only possible, but common, to deck out in such a manner, as that they shall generally pass as the effect of a refined and liberal habit of thinking. A celebrated orator of antiquity has justly remarked, that every particular virtue has some vice so like it, as sometimes to render it difficult to distinguish between them. Thus, licentiousness and foolhardiness, if succesful, may pass under the names of liberty and fortitude; obstinacy, cruelty and superstition, may be so represented, as to obtain the praise due to patience, justice and religion; profusion may be esteemed liberality; and parsimony, frugality; timidity may be mistaken for modesty; haughtiness for dignity; weakness for mercy;

and cunning for prudence. Nothing affords such scope for the artful exertions of designing men, or is so apt to mislead the ignorant, and confound the weak, as this apparent affinity between virtue and vice; and no plan of seduction has been more assiduously or more successfully pursued, during the present age, than this has been. All those duties, which are of imperfect obligation, which, being in some respects indeterminate, cannot be absolutely commanded or rigorously enforced, are particularly liable to be thus perverted; and have accordingly given colour to much flimsy reasoning, to distinctions and conclusions of endless variety. But such misrepresentations do not always rest here; but are often, from the natural progress of every vicious propensity, extended to duties of perfect obligation. Eccentric opinions on almost every subject, however determinate, are by some men anxiously adopted, and keenly defended; and elaborate treatises have sometimes been written, in order to defend falsehood or perjury, and other crimes equally disgraceful to our nature, and injurious to society. Truth is thus often buried in the mist of scepticism; and so commodiously formed, as completely to accord with the passing whim of the day. Nay, so far has the love of variety carried some men, that, provided you oppose, no matter how, those principles which have had the sanction of antiquity, or have been rendered venerable by establishment, and the celebrity of those who have for ages professed or defended them; if their *candour*, or, more probably, their own pri-

vate opinions, will not permit them to allow that you are in the right, they will, without hesitation, grant, because you have left the beaten tract, that you are in the road to truth; at all events, they will conclude, for your comfort, that, whether your enquiry be successful or not, provided you think so, and are satisfied, it is enough. Truth, therefore, it would appear, were such reasoning to be followed in estimating it, is just what every one chooses to think it, and becomes as variable as the wind. Thus, by artfully applying conclusions, which, in certain circumstances, are just, to cases in which they do not hold at all, have infidels and sceptics strewed the road of knowledge with endless doubts and difficulties. Like the false prophets, who are foretold in scripture, and who, appearing in sheeps cloathing, though inwardly they are ravening wolves, would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect,—these men exhibit virtue, happiness, and truth, as the objects of their pursuit; whilst, by making each man's conduct depend, not on an invariable law, but on feeling, sentiment, or circumstances, they most effectually contribute to annihilate all virtue, honour, and honesty.

Nothing is more dangerous (I speak from experience) than the rage for new opinions, and original or uncommon modes of thinking, which unfortunately so much obtains at present. Such nostrums may afford a temporary gratification to vanity, but this will, in all probability, be accompanied with the seeds of future contrition. I have known several persons, of considerable note in the literary world,

and I have heard of others, who, in the full meridian of their glory, have sometimes pursued those unsubstantial vanities, and who, by a strange inconsistency have, during the pursuit, imagined that they would become the strongest pillars of their future fame. But, in the end of their days, and when novelty had broke the charm which had hitherto deluded them, they saw and acknowledged their folly; because they then found, that what they had pursued, from sport, for recreation, or from vanity, had produced consequences which they never intended, and had been made the basis of reasonings, and the motives to actions, which they abhorred. Indeed, the human mind cannot thus be tampered with, without material injury. What at present may appear trifling, may hereafter be followed by most important consequences. The operation may be slow, but it will be sure; and what was at first meant probably only to amuse the understanding, may afterwards be found possessed of qualities to pervert the judgment. By these remarks, I am far from intending to calumniate the pursuit of truth, or to retard the improvement of knowledge. I own, however, I am of opinion, that truth is more likely to be found in the *good old way*, than amidst the crude and eccentric opinions of modern philosophers, whose labours I deprecate, not because I am unwilling to be convinced, but because I find them, if not absolutely vicious in themselves, leading to vice and error in those who are not capable of distinguishing between truth and falsehood. Nothing surely can be more laudable, than to enquire after truth, and

to employ ourselves in the cultivation of those faculties which God has bestowed upon us. This is a general maxim, to which no man can object. But it may be abused, and, under this fair pretence, men may be artfully deprived of their dearest comforts. It is thus that those *reading societies* which you mention, and some of which I have also known, have operated on the minds of ignorant men ; and it is thus that the artful partizans of infidelity and faction have excited and kept awake the clamours which disgrace these times. To oppose these efforts, has become unfashionable : To oppose them by reasoning, is stigmatized as illiberal : To repress them by authority, though their baneful consequences be as clear as day, is called persecution. Nay, these men have not unfrequently voluntarily laid themselves open to legal censure, that they might more powerfully operate on the minds of the ignorant, by representing themselves as persecuted patriots, or as the innocent victims of a love of truth.

Perhaps, the most alarming feature of the present day, is the tendency in our youth to this daring mode of thinking, and of action ; because it affords us a still more melancholy prospect of what is to succeed. The vanity, the petulance, and ignorance, of those with whom you spent your early years, you have exposed in colours sufficiently strong; and I can vouch for the truth of your representation in general, from numerous instances, both abroad and at home, which have come under my own observation. In the Universities, they often forget that they are but scholars, and petulantly assume

the character of philosophers, when as yet they barely know the outlines of science, or perhaps not quite so much. Their pride, combined with dissipation, leads them often to feel authority irksome, and the restraints of a college painful. They therefore calumniate their masters, in order to palliate their own crimes; and complain of ignorance and improper method, on the part of their superiors, when the fault is evidently and wholly their own. If their petulance, their negligence, and ignorance, shall finally meet with that return which such conduct merits, no bounds can contain their indignant rage. They complain of their masters, who have probably done no more than their duty, in the most malicious and acrimonious terms; and endeavour to excuse or conceal their own faults, by asserting, that their teachers wish to repress genius, freedom of thought, and learning, free from, and superior to, the trammels of the schools; and that they shew themselves, in the republic of letters, petty tyrants.

Modesty, were these youths possessed of such a quality, would naturally repress such violent ebullitions; and would lead them to imagine, that though their masters are not infallible, as they have had more experience, and are in all probability possessed of more coolness than they, it is possible they are less liable to error. At all events, of the exertion of authority in such cases, they are the only proper judges; and the scholars of all others the worst. The modest virtues are certainly those which are calculated to adorn and to recommend youth; and without which no great hopes of future

celebrity can generally be entertained. The only expectation which petulant wit, and intolerance of restraint in early life, seem calculated to raise,—is unrestrained ridicule of every thing serious or sacred, and universal turbulence and licentiousness, in their maturer years. Instances might be adduced, in which pride has excited such persons to exertions which have afterwards raised them high in the lists of fame. But their obstinacy is generally equally conspicuous, then, as it was in their youth, and often degenerates into a malignant and envious opposition to whatever retards their views, or restrains their passions. It oftener happens, however, that such conduct in early youth, is followed, not by future greatness even of this equivocal kind, but by ignorance and oblivion.

It is from these sources, my dear Sir, that we are to derive the infidelity and vices of the present age; and he who has carefully examined the causes, cannot justly admire the effects. The persons, however, who most assiduously retail the cry about reform in the state, and superstition in the church, carefully keep this out of view; though it would not be very difficult to prove, that they have themselves greatly contributed to the rise and progress of such vicious dispositions, undoubtedly because they think, and justly think, that such principles and conduct, generally adopted, would most effectually promote their purposes. I have known many instances of these artful deceivers being on the watch for every new student who arrived in the University, at which they took their post, and most assidu-

ously using every means, fair and foul, to pervert their minds, and render them dissatisfied with their teachers. There was particularly one man, whose banishment to Botany Bay has been lamented with all the pathos of which language is capable, and whose character has been celebrated, even in Parliament, as that of a martyr to the love of truth and liberty,—whose conduct in this respect was most notorious and detestable. He was a member of one of the most ancient and celebrated Universities in Europe; and, till his behaviour became such as to oblige him to leave it, he allowed no young man to settle in it, without attempting to shake his religious creed; to pervert his notions of goverment; and to render him dissatisfied with his teachers, and turbulent in the community. His dexterity, in exciting animosities among the masters, and turbulence among the scholars, is well known, and at length brought him the return which it merited. In every University of any magnitude, with which I am acquainted, I have found persons of similar principles, and of at least equal activity, directed, however, generally with more reserve. That there are such in this University I need not inform you, as you have suffered not a little from their artifices. But that we should have our seminaries of learning contaminated by insolent foreigners, as mentioned in your letter; that we should have our youth perverted; our mode of education traduced; and our religion and laws calumniated, by exotics, totally unacquainted with them, and of whom we know nothing,—is, if possible, still more intolerable. Men

have certainly a right to think of the government and policy of foreign states as they please; but no man can be at liberty, while under the protection of any state, to contribute to its overthrow, or to render its subjects dissatisfied with their religion and laws; not merely because he can probably be no good judge of either, but because such conduct is morally and fundamentally wrong. I believe, however, it is a principle of the modern systems, that philosophers are to endeavour to reform all nations, and, if possible, to disseminate universal philanthropy. I confess I do not admire so broad and indefinite a basis; and am still inclined to believe, that the narrower foundation of the partial affections, and the social diverging from them, will be found to proceed from more sound policy, and to be eventually productive of more salutary effects.

Such, in short, are the dangers, and such the principles, of the present day. The whole, I am convinced, proceeds on a system artfully contrived, and eagerly pursued; and the effects, were it finally to succeed, would, in my apprehension, be dreadful indeed. Religion affords the strongest barrier against the designs of these insidious men; and religion has accordingly been attacked by them with all the art of which they are capable; and no means, which could be supposed to produce any effect, have been left untried to put it out of countenance. It is no small consolation to me, that my poor endeavours in its defence have been so successful as to warn you of your danger, and to induce you to separate from a set of men, whose views, though generally

concealed under specious appearances, are of the most dangerous tendency.

I am sorry that, from being obliged to go to the country to-morrow, I shall not have it in my power to visit you till my return, which, however, will be in a fortnight at farthe t. I trust, what I have now said, together with what you yourself have experienced, will exhibit the character of your former associates in such a light, as to confirm you more and more in your renunciation of them. Your task, I must repeat, will, in the beginning, be difficult; because it will present you, for some time, with little else but images of your own misconduct. Determined perseverance, however, will at length, and I trust, soon, surmount those difficulties, and will afford you gratifications of a higher nature than any you have hitherto been accustomed to; will enable you to enjoy pleasures which please upon reflection. I have sent you some books, which I conceive may have a tendency to direct your ideas into the proper channel; and which may probably assist you in your farther enquiries into the truth of that religion which you have so long neglected and despised. When you have made that progress in these studies, which I hope to be the happy witness of, you will indeed be astonished at your former delusion, during which, you are doubtless ready to confess, that your portion of real enjoyment has been very scanty; while of these pursuits you may truly use the language of Cicero, and say: "Hæc studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium, ac solatium præ-

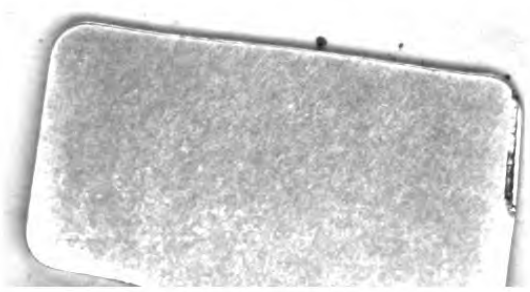
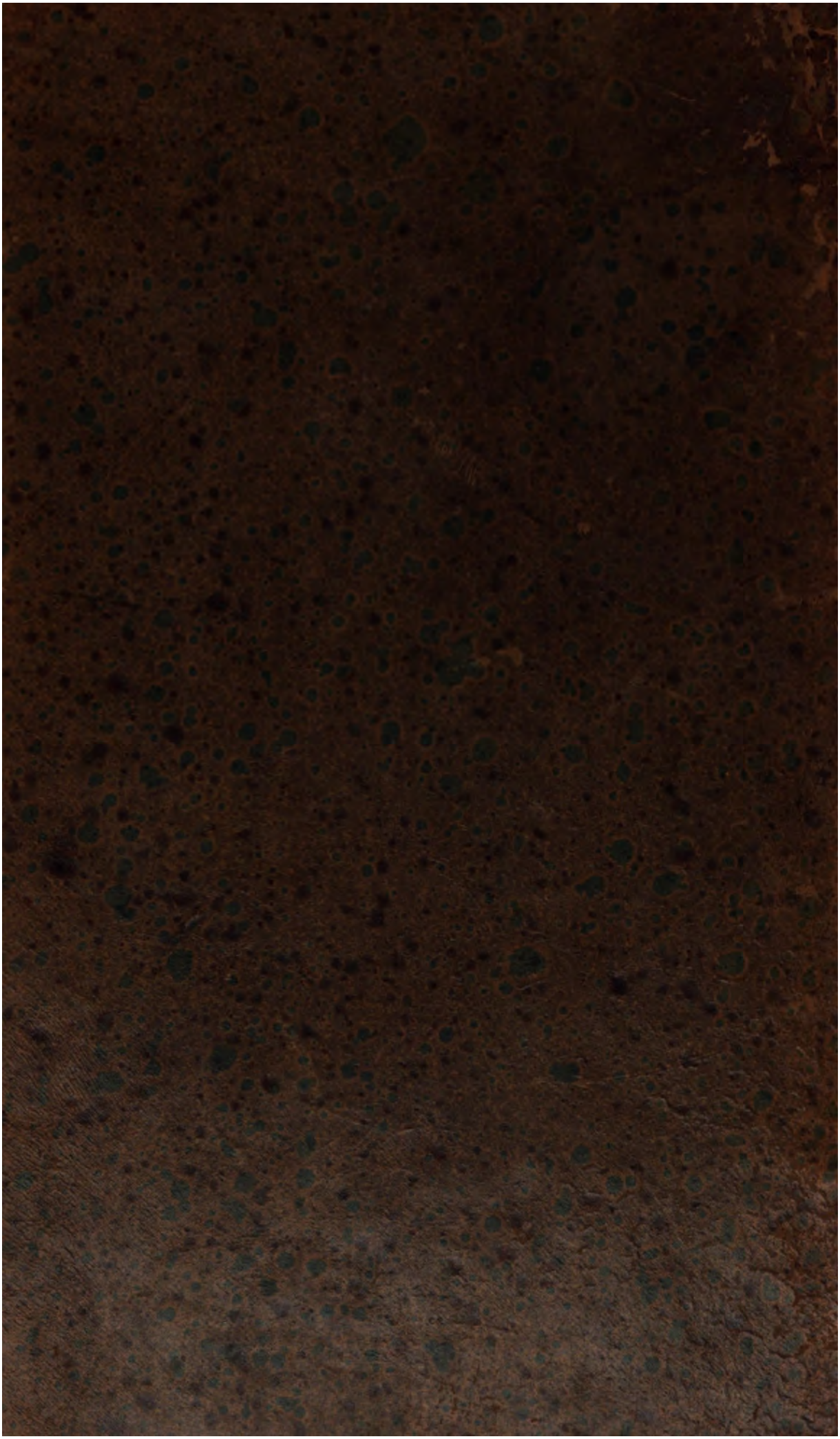
bent, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur."

As you have not lately attended the meetings of our society, you probably do not know that they are still continued once every three weeks; and that I have been induced, not altogether with my will, to promise, at our next meeting, some general remarks on the political state and opinions of the country, in the present period, as a kind of sequel to those on revelation: political duty undoubtedly forming a part, and a very important part, of our religious obligation. If you wish to hear what little I have to say on this subject, and are not afraid to mix with us again, I shall accompany you to the usual place of meeting on Saturday fortnight. But whether this be agreeable to you, or not, I shall see you at leisure before that time; and I shall make a point of your accompanying me to the country, about the middle of July, when you shall see and judge of my mode of life; and when you may command, amidst the unruffled scenes of rural retirement, what assistance I can afford you, either in arranging your affairs, or directing your studies and amusements. In the mean time, I am, dear Sir, with hearty prayers for your improvement, your most faithful friend

THOMAS CHRISTIAN.

EDINBURGH, 31st MAY 1797.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 17. line 20. Dele *he.*
—— 53. — 21. For *in human*, read *inhuman.*
—— 67. — 17. For *at one*, read *atone.*
—— 108. — 1. Before the word *shallow*, a full point.
—— 160. — 13. For *degrees* read *degree.*
—— 187. — 2. For *Mylitte*, read *Mylitta.*
—— 270 last line, for *Judia*, read *Judea.*
—— 282. — 30. Insert *and* after darkneſs.
—— 286. last line, for *successive* read *successful.*
—— 298. 3 line from bottom of note, for *refuse* read *recluse.*
—— 310, last line, for *formed* read *found.*
—— —. ——— for *could* read *would.*
—— 311. — 17. for *he*, read *they.* and line 18. for *his* read *their.*